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# University Integration in Slovenia: Tracing the Policy Trajectory

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*An exploration of integration and how universities do it*

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## Abstract

In a globalised, knowledge-intensive society, in which higher education is seen as inextricably linked to economic and social progress, how the university is conceived, and indeed valued, has come into focus. This thesis traces the trajectory of the resultant policies that imply a more integrated university actor. It provides a conceptual basis for university integration and rationales thereof, and examines the formation of 'policies of integration' in the context of Slovenia. Following the trajectory, the thesis attempts to understand how universities have interpreted and enacted these systemic changes through an examination of two cases. By doing so, the intention is to provide a foundation for future research. Consequently, a number of dichotomies and variations emerged, as global scripts came up against local identities. Universities are only now beginning to substantively react to such changes. Thus, how universities 'do' policies of integration in Slovenia is varied and unfolding.

**Keywords:** University, organisational integration, institution, policy trajectory, Slovenia



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## Forward

saṅkarṣaṇāya sūkṣmāya  
 durantāyāntakāya ca  
 namo viśva-prabodhāya  
 pradyumnāyāntar-ātmāne

I feel that the time is ripe for a study on university integration in Slovenia. After much anticipation it seems that the ball of integration is gaining momentum and universities are poised to enter a more mature phase of development. Moreover, one witnesses a growing awareness of the importance of organisations; the groups of people who are too often side-lined to grander, political narratives.

It is with trepidation that a New Zealander delves into Slovenian universities. I therefore seek the permission, patience and tolerance of all those to whom this world belongs. What is intended is a critical but constructive attempt to analyse what is a pertinent issue in the region. The author admits his ignorance and cultural biases, but hopes that ignorance really is the beginning of real knowledge.

Without further ado, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to: firstly my supervisor, Professor Pavel Zgaga, whose patience, empathy, wisdom, and vast knowledge and experience were enlightening; the MaRIHE professoriate and staff who have all enriched my perspective; particularly Professor CAI Yuzhuo and Dr YE Juyan who more directly offered their time and advice for this thesis; Dr Attila Pausits, whose leadership and ceaseless encouragement know no bounds; all the interviewees who were kind enough to offer their time and insights; Dr Manja Klemenčič and Dr Martina Vukasović for their constructive feedback; especially my wonderful peers and friends from MaRIHE who shared and contributed to this journey with me; and finally my beloved family, Urša, Luka and Mila, to whom I dedicate this thesis.

*Andrew G. Traveller*

Slovenj Gradec, 21 June 2014

*If you do not change direction, you may end up where you are heading - Lao Tzu*

## **1. Introduction**

### **1.1. Framing the Issue**

This thesis is primarily concerned with the university and its transformation, focussing on university integration in Slovenia.

In order to understand the topic more fully, some context is first needed. Indeed, the forces driving the transformation of the university are complex and can be viewed on multiple levels. Krücken, Blümel & Kloeke (2013) have outlined three levels of analysis, which are useful for framing the issue; namely: the macro level of society, the level of higher education (HE) governance (i.e. system level), and at the university level itself.

At the macro level, much has been written over the last few decades about the changing relationship between society, the economy and the perceived importance of knowledge and knowledge production for the prosperity of nations. In the post-industrial world, a strong narrative has emerged; that of the ‘knowledge-based economy’ (KBE) (Bell, 1973; Jessop, 2008; OECD, 1996), according to which knowledge replaces capital as the dominant factor driving production, growth and competition (Castells, 2000).

This changing relationship between knowledge, society and the economy raises the question as to where the university fits in this new world order, as other organisations encroach upon its hegemony over knowledge production (Bastedo, 2012). How the university is conceived, and indeed valued, has therefore come under scrutiny. Consequently, increasing conceptualisations of the university come to bear: from the university as the pursuer of truth and the champion of knowledge and its dissemination (Thorens, 1996); to a student-centred view in which the transformational potential of HE is emphasised (Olds & Robertson, 2014); to an instrumental view of the university to fulfil social, political and economic interests (Nussbaum, 2010; Shapiro, 2005).

This later conceptualisation is clearly in line with the notion of the KBE. Hence, an instrumental logic of the university has become particularly prominent. Not only does the KBE narrative contribute to its legitimacy, but compelling changes have also occurred resulting in a closer relationship and the increased importance of HE in society; namely, the essential training of human capital, increased enrolments involving large segments of the population, the growing costs to both governments and families, and the perceived economic importance of HE, particularly in times of economic crisis (Altbach, 1999). Importantly, this instrumentalisation also includes inherent demands for greater social justice (Ramirez, 2006). Moreover, these phenomena are becoming discursively accentuated by governments, scholars and international organisations at the possible expense of intrinsic values (Galevski, 2013; Nussbaum, 2010; Zgaga, 2011).

Viewed in total, universities now operate in an increasingly complex world in which multifarious demands are being placed on them to satisfy their expanding roles. Thus the notion of the ‘multiversity’ has emerged (Kerr, 1995); an institution with a broad, and often conflicting, array of missions.

The second level of analysis is concerned with how HE systems change to address these new demands. Stemming from the new logics are changes to the models and mechanisms (Edelstein

& Douglass, 2012) governing the structuring and organisation of HE both at a systemic level and at an institutional level.

In Europe, New Public Management (NPM) has emerged as a model to deal with these new macro pressures. Broadly, NPM refers to government policies that seek to modernise and render more effective the public sector through a market-oriented approach (Hood, 1991). This constitutes a momentous change from a dominant state to dominant market model (Neave & van Vught, 1991). This includes new modes of inter-organisational governing relations (Amaral, Jones & Karseth, 2002). “While the state is withdrawing to a more supervisory role via ‘steering at a distance’, universities have been granted substantial leeway with regard to institutional autonomy” (Krücken et al, 2009, p. 1).

Such changes have had ramifications for universities; the third level of analysis. Indeed, “organizations are open to the influence of the legal system, to what other similar organizations do, and to the discourse generated by professionals on how best to function as an organization” (Ramirez & Christensen, 2013, p. 696). Consequently, with the reshuffling of authority and responsibilities across different levels of the HE system, universities take on more prominent roles. “This inspired a different kind of thinking about the university and attempts at transforming universities into more ‘complete’ organizations” (de Boer et al, 2007, p. 42).

Indeed, in order to compete in this new global education market (Marginson, 2006), attempts have been made to reimagine and reconstruct the university as an organisational actor (de Boer et al, 2007, Krücken & Meier, 2006; Nokkala, 2007, Brunsson & Sahlin-Andersson, 2000), an “*integrated*, goal-oriented entity that deliberately chooses its own actions and that can thus be held responsible for what it does” (Krücken & Meier 2006, p. 241).

In summary, one witnesses a major shift in both the *institution* and *organisation* of the university, and the consequent emergence of a more integrated model. Indeed, the waves of democratisation and marketization have given rise to an increasingly socially embedded university (Shapiro, 2005); the core elements of which are broad inclusiveness, social usefulness, and organizational flexibility (Ramirez, 2006). Concurrently, system level trends, especially NPM, have resulted in a more rational and ‘managed’ university (Deem, 1998). Thus, integration has become a transnational trend in a global educational environment (Ramirez & Christensen, 2013).

## 1.2. The Case of Slovenia

In order to more tangibly comprehend the diffusion of these predominantly European trends, this thesis focuses on a national case; that of Slovenia.

Slovenia has not been immune from changes in its European environment. Consequently, since gaining independence from Yugoslavia in 1991, Slovenia has sought greater university integration. Many of these attempts to transform university governance have occurred at the second level of analysis, i.e. the system level. Legally at least, universities are now integrated institutions

However, the new, normative notion of the university as an integrated entity is particularly challenging for countries whose historical legacies significantly differ in terms of both how the university is imagined and organised. As Ramirez & Christensen (2013) put it, different ‘roots’ result in different ‘routes’. Slovenia is a case in point. The traditional institutional structure of Slovenian universities consists of powerful, legally autonomous faculties under the symbolic umbrella of public universities, rather than as complete legal, organisational or sociological

entities. This regional idiosyncrasy resulted in weak institutional integration and a significant variance in funding and quality among these entities (Zgaga, 1996; Huisman & Vrečko, 2003).

Compounding this tension between transnational influences and the Slovenian legacy is the fact that the implementation at the level of the university of such systemic changes involves not only those from inherently different backgrounds and paradigms, but also who have little say in the re-design of HE systems (Bergan, 2012). Thus, while universities have sought to adapt to the new environment, a dichotomy has emerged between international norms and local identities (Zgaga, 2013b). As such, the integration of universities has been fraught with challenges in Slovenia and across the Western Balkans.

### 1.3. Literature Gap and Significance

At this point it is pertinent to point out that, in Slovenia and at the level of the university, the situation regarding how integration has been interpreted and enacted is unclear. Indeed, while it is evident that the aforementioned *systemic* changes towards integration have occurred, there is a dearth of literature as to how this notion of a unified university has manifested itself 'on the ground'. Thus, a clear empirical gap is apparent.

Secondly, much of the literature remains theoretical and few applied studies have been identified, particularly in HE. More commonly, studies address NPM reforms and the associated reconstruction of *public sector* organisations, namely schools, healthcare organisations, local governments, and state authorities (e.g. Hood, 1991; Schick, 1996; Olsen & Peters, 1996; Brunsson & Sahlin-Andersson, 2000; Skälén, 2004; Rondeaux, 2006). Thus, a sectorial gap emerges.

However, some studies do include HE examples (e.g. Colado, 1996). More recently, a number of studies have concentrated on certain aspects of the university in light of the new integrated model, such as: research programming and the teaching-research nexus (Leistyte, 2008; 2009); the transformation of Dutch universities (de Boer et al., 2007); the rationalisation and formalisation of the university (Ramirez, 2006; 2009); and organisational actorhood (Krücken et al., 2006; 2009; 2011; 2013). However, these studies have been focused either on a limited number of variables or solely on Western European and Anglo-Saxon countries. Thus, methodological (i.e. what variables have been looked at) and country gaps are also apparent.

This thesis therefore aims to expand on the previous studies. It clearly aligns with previous research and transports it into new geographical terrain and extends it over a wider array of variables to holistically capture the notion of integration, its context and the associated policy trajectory.

The further significance of this thesis relates to the fact that university integration is of interest to a number of external parties; namely, influential international agencies who strongly advise HE leaders in the Western Balkans to integrate universities (e.g. Linden et al., 2008; European Commission, 2011; EUA, 2013; WUS, 2010; OECD, 2011). Accordingly, the legacy of legally, functionally, financially and academically autonomous faculties is purported to "hinder the process of modernisation and the implementation of coherent reform measures not only within countries, but even within one institution. One of the central milestones to be achieved in the former Yugoslavian states is to overcome this challenge" (WUS, 2010).

Indeed, a key advantage of tighter integration of universities is the expected efficiency gains. This is particularly significant in light of decreased public funding for universities in Slovenia and the ongoing financial crisis in the Euro-zone.

More broadly, this study provides a foundation for a wider debate about the tensions between increased managerialism and collegial governance models, academic freedom, and the meaning, purpose and philosophy of HE in general for policy makers, institutional leaders, staff, external stakeholders and the wider public.

#### 1.4. Approach, Perspectives & Structure

To account for this complex and multi-layered change to the university institution, its organisation and its degree of integration, multiple analytical perspectives are required. Indeed, as Ball (1993, p. 10) asserts: “The complexity and scope of policy analysis – from an interest in the workings of the state to a concern with contexts of practice and the distributional outcomes of policy – preclude the possibility of successful single-theory explanations”.

Therefore, this thesis addresses the topic of university integration through a *policy trajectory* approach (Ball, 1993). This allows for the analysis to progress through interrelated vantage points encompassing *policy formation*, *interpretation* and *enactment*, in other words, a “cross-sectional rather than a single level analysis by tracing policy formulation, struggle and response from within the state itself through to the various recipients of policy” (Ball, 2000, p. 1839).

Like the aforementioned three levels of analysis by Krücken et al. (2013), the policy trajectory encompasses and connects the macro, meso and micro levels of analysis. Thus, it allows the analysis to move from a context related to the conceptual understanding of why policies of integration emerge and the subsequent policy formation and production, to an empirical understanding of how such policies have been interpreted and enacted at a local level. Within each of these contexts, there are several arenas of action. And each context involves “struggle and compromise and ad-hokery. They are loosely-coupled and there is no simple one direction of flow of information between them” (Ball et al., 2012).

Indeed, these various vantage points are not mutually exclusive; rather they exist in mutual exchange. The policy trajectory approach seeks to trace the developments between each context. By doing so, several factors are taken into consideration. These include both objective conditions and the subjectivities and creative interpretations of actors to multiple and sometimes contradictory policy demands (Ball et al., 2012). Thus, this thesis is concerned both with the *formal* elements of university integration (e.g. structures, policies and data) and also *informal*, socio-cultural elements (e.g. behaviours, attitudes, norms and values).

A major challenge was how to analyse the results of the research whilst neglecting neither the *formal* and *informal* elements of university integration, nor the trajectory of *policy formation*, *interpretation* and *enactment*. To resolve this, the author draws frequently on neo-institutional theory. A group of theories rather than a singular, concrete theory, neo-institutionalism provides a deep and comprehensive conceptual toolkit that looks at why and how institutions emerge in a certain way within a given context and how institutions provide meaning, and shape, constrain and enable individual members’ action. Thus, this theoretical perspective adequately accounts for the socio-cultural *and* material evolution of university integration, and provides macro, meso and micro perspectives for analysis. The intention is that by employing neo-institutional theory, differing approaches to the conceptualisation and organisation of universities will be highlighted, positioning them in a broader context. Hopefully, this will aid in reconciling certain normative opinions as to the ‘right’ way of university organisation.

However, it must be stated upfront that it is not possible to capture the totality of contingencies, modes of organisation, and institutional cultures that exist. Indeed, Goodrick and Reay (2011) point out that organisations are not merely subjected to one or two dominant institutional logics,

but institutional fields are characterised by a ‘constellation of logics’. At the risk of stereotyping, this paper will nevertheless strive to provide a narrative of the dominant policy trajectories that can be perceived in Slovenia in recent years related to integration.

Accordingly, section 3 sets out, through an examination of the literature, to explore the initial contexts of the policy trajectory. This includes an exploration of the formation of policies related to the integration of the university; providing a background and rationales, including a brief overview of relevant global trends and political circumstances. It goes on to provide a current account of how such policies can be perceived at both a European and national level. It also explores in more depth the concept of integration and how such concepts may be interpreted and enacted within institutions. Last but not least, it provides an important contextual background for the case of Slovenia. Section 4 goes on to outline the empirical part of this thesis, in which evidence is sought, presented and discussed that looks at how universities in Slovenia ‘do’ policy. This section includes a methodological description. Finally, section 5 concludes with some general observations, reflections and recommendations.

## 2. Research Aims and Questions

There are two main research aims: 1) to extend and deepen theoretical understandings of policy trajectories related to university integration. This includes seeking to understand systemic influences, national policies and their rationales and formation; 2) to produce detailed, critical and contextualised accounts of the interpretations and enactments of policies of integration in three universities in Slovenia. This thesis is therefore about how universities ‘do’ policy (Ball et al., 2012); how policies become ‘live’ and get enacted (or not) within universities.

Given the significant breadth of this topic, coupled with the limited timeframe associated with this thesis, it is expected that only a high-level picture will be obtained, rather than a highly nuanced and definitive conclusion. However, the intention is to map uncharted territory. Providing some theoretical grounding on university integration in Slovenia coupled with tracing the policy trajectory, an understanding of the salient issues and the emergence of latent questions will be the main fruits of this thesis.

In order to “bring together structural, macro-level analysis of educational systems and educational policies and micro level investigations, especially those which take account of people’s perceptions and experiences” (Ozga, 1990, p. 359), the following sub-questions are posed:

- a) What are the rationales underlying university integration, and policies thereof?
- b) What are the formal/legislative/systemic/policy changes that have occurred due to/as part of HE reforms in Slovenia regarding university integration?
- c) How are policies to integrate the university interpreted and enacted by institutional actors given the resources available to them?
- d) How do socio-cultural, historical and contextual factors affect the ways in which universities interpret and enact a policy of integration?

Therefore, the thesis is both descriptive and explanatory in nature, as it aims to document and describe the nature of university integration, and at the same time it seeks to identify or discover important categories of meanings and generate hypotheses for further research (Cai, 2013).

### 3. Policy Formation (Background and Literature Review)

This section attempts to trace a connection between global forces and changes to system-level governance arrangements, and their impact on the reconstruction of the university towards a more integrated model. In other words, it aims to examine the context of policy formation related to university integration.

#### 3.1. Systems in Transition

The knowledge-based economy is a well-established concept that has guided and continues to guide public policy the world over. In such a world, knowledge, skills and human capital make up the engine that drives economic, social and cultural development (OECD, 1996). Developing countries are seeking ways in which to shift from an agricultural and labour intensive economic base to a more skilled and knowledgeable economy (Drucker, 1969). And developed countries attempt to continually harness this force of knowledge by making more productive use of inputs, requiring continual innovation (Porter, 1998). Indeed this “capitalisation of knowledge” in the 21st century means that economic and social development depends increasingly on knowledge rather than labour and capital (Viale & Etzkowitz, 2010)

Simultaneously, an on-going trend in economic activity sees the increased flow of capital, goods, labour and knowledge across national borders in an interconnected, globalized economy (Powell & Snellman, 2004). As expressed in an OECD report, “The emergence of a *global* knowledge-based or information society is dramatically transforming the modes of production and social organizations of advanced societies” (OECD 2005, p. 1).

Accordingly, institutional arrangements have come under significant scrutiny, as questions arise as to the relevance and roles of pre-existing institutions in this new, globalised, knowledge-based era. In this environment, institutions are required to operate in what is a multi-polar and multi-layered governance context. This entails new roles, legitimisations and relationships between actors (Clark, 1983; Neave & van Vught, 1991). Consequently, concepts such as the national innovation system (Freeman, 1987; Lundvall, 1992) and the triple helix (Etzkowitz & Leydesdorff, 2000) reimagine these relationships, in which governments, universities and industry are increasingly entangled within an interconnected (economic) system.

This is especially significant for universities. Indeed, the economic discourse that couches these concepts implies new, instrumental logics for universities, which is perpetuated by “social imaginaries” stemming from international institutions (Rizvi & Lingard, 2009; Taylor, 2004). Slaughter & Leslie (1997, p. 36-7) identify four consequences of such global imaginaries, namely: financial constraint by the state on discretionary activities such as HE, necessitated by fierce international competition; the growing centrality to HE of STEM subjects associated with international markets; tightening relationships between governments and multinationals related to product development and innovation; and an increased focus on global intellectual property strategies within multinationals and established industrial countries, representing a new environment for university research.

Accordingly, it has been suggested that the “adoption of market-type instruments and shifting behavioural postures within universities [imply] a fundamental shift in the values and norms of HE, where the public good dimension is downplayed in favour of the ‘logic of the marketplace’ [with] negative effects on the inner life and social function of universities” (Pinheiro & Stensaker, 2013, p. 7).



In addition to these new rationalities, universities have also faced other global demands; notably, a rise in student enrolments (Trow, 1973), increased internationalisation, technological innovations and calls for social justice (Ramirez, 2006). Naturally, questions arise as to how the university can reconcile these new demands with its historical identity and vocation. Such questions of reconciliation are succinctly posed by de Sousa Santos (2012, p. 7) thus:

whether the university can successfully reinvent itself as a center of knowledge in a globalizing society with many other centers; whether there will be room for “critical, heterodox, non-marketable knowledge,” respectful of cultural diversity, in the university of the future; whether the scenario of a growing gap between “central” and “peripheral” universities can be avoided; whether market imperatives can be relativized as a criterion for successful research and the needs of society—in particular those not reducible to market needs—be taken sufficiently into account; and, whether the university can become the site of the re-founding of “a new idea of universalism on a new, intercultural basis.”

In sum, global forces imbue universities with a vast range of concepts (Smith & Webster, 1997), they imply a multitude of goals (Kerr, 1995), vested interests (de Boer & Stensaker, 2007), and different modus operandi. This complexity defines the new environment in which both policy makers and universities inhabit, who contribute to its on-going construction and reproduction (Nokkala, 2007).

### **3.2. Emergent European Policies**

This changing role of HE in society, imbued with new meanings and greater utility, is reflected in transnational policies. Understanding how such policies come to be is the first step in the policy trajectory.

As this thesis investigates the case of Slovenia, it is pertinent to first discuss how the new ‘realities’ are embodied in HE policy in Europe. The European space is significant as an influential European governance layer on HE systems and institutions has come into focus (Corbett, 2005; Vukasović, 2013), which sets the agenda for domestic policy in many ways. Indeed, the cultural political economy that has emerged in Europe (Jessop, 2008) facilitates increased supranational decision making and influence. This provides new meaning for HE systems, as countries indirectly lose autonomy over their HE agenda for fear of exclusion from European initiatives - and the potential economic gains associated with such initiatives (Batory & Lindstrom, 2011). This is particularly acute in small, transitional, peripheral countries like Slovenia (Zgaga et al., 2013), who are exposed to an increasingly normative (or coercive) European influence (Hartmann, 2008). As countries strive to integrate, their educational traditions and philosophies come up against new rationales provided by transnational initiatives. Universities have therefore been expected to conform to the emerged environment by developing new norms, roles, values, and rationales compatible with the new order (Falkner & Treib, 2008). However, Zgaga (2013b) asserts that while the European and global discourses penetrate the counties of the Western Balkans, they may be “softened” or “dropped” in due course.

But before discussing this European policy agenda as it relates to university integration, what is actually meant by *policy* must be addressed. While a full theoretical discussion is outside the scope of this thesis, it is important to define *policy* so as to be able to identify ‘policies of integration’ and thus research their trajectories. The Cambridge Dictionary (2014) defines it thus: “a set of ideas or a plan of what to do in particular situations that has been agreed officially by a group of people, a business organization, a government, or a political party”. This is a rather

narrow concept of policy, in which a solution to a problem is formally agreed upon and then translated into what Ball et al. (2012) describe as “policy texts”; i.e. legislature, manifestos, plans, etc. As Maassen (2003, p. 49) cautions: “This does not imply that the government is an almighty actor that can deterministically prescribe changes in the management structures, culture and function of HE institutions. Instead, it is assumed that government introduces, implicitly or explicitly, the regulatory, policy and funding frameworks within which the public sector HE institutions are expected to introduce, adapt or strengthen their structures”.

However, in order to understand ‘policies of integration’ more fully, a supplementary concept of policy is needed that recognises it as a process of “jumbled, messy, contested, creative and mundane social interactions” (Ball et al., 2012, p. 2), what Colebatch (2002) terms “policy activity”, comprising games of power and agenda-pushing, negotiations and coalition building between a variety of policy stakeholders. This results in a different kind of *policy*, which can be described as emergent and informal.

This is a particularly useful concept of policy in the European context, in which the European Union (EU) has limited formal competences with regards to HE; its role is confined to supporting member states in their provision of education, lacking the ability to impose binding policy decisions and regulation. In other words, the EU is limited in its ability to produce ‘policy texts’. Indeed, Article 165 in the *Treaty on the functioning of the European Union* states the EU’s limited mandate as contributing solely to “the quality of education by encouraging cooperation between member states”, whilst clearly respecting the sovereignty of member states to determine the “content of teaching and the organization of education systems” (EU, 2012). Furthermore, the Bologna process – the other main regional driving force- issues only non-binding communiqués.

In line with this definition of policy formation, Corbett (2003) describes the European policy development process through the phenomenon of ‘policy entrepreneurship’. She states that the choices that come to face decision-makers are a result of a dual process, which consists of “agenda-setting and challenges to the agenda in the form of a specified alternative. It is out of this confrontation that policy-makers’ choice is made and presented to decision-makers” (Corbett, 2003, p. 316). The actors, both individual and institutional, who succeed in advancing issues on the agenda are termed ‘policy entrepreneurs’. According to this conception of policy, the EU can be considered a strong HE policy actor, having embarked upon its first education action programme as early as 1976, and currently boasting a dedicated directorate, a number a facilitative tools (and budgets) and a wealth of data; all of which constitute a rather large policy ‘carrot’.

Any discussion of how universities ‘do’ policy must include both of these conceptualisations. They combine to give an understanding of a system-level shift in HE governance, accounting for a top-down attempt by government to influence and regulate university actors and their environment (Maassen, 2003) and also for how the activities of policy entrepreneurs can produce pressures on HE systems and institutions. This allows a richer analysis of how policy directives and materials are made reality by the subjectivities of individuals (Ball et al., 2012).

To this end, the author argues that HE ‘policies of integration’ comprise both strong, normative policy texts (primarily at the national level) as well as policy activity by policy entrepreneurs (primarily at the supranational and intergovernmental level) that strongly shape what is ‘done’ by universities.

But, substantively, what constitutes European HE policy? The emerged neo-liberal public policy reaction to societal pressures and global forces, which demands a greater degree of sophistication from HE systems and institutions, has been coined NPM. Broadly, NPM has sought to increase

market forces and competition, subsequently introducing coordination mechanisms, re-regulation and performance management (Maassen, 2003). This has meant new modes of inter-organisational governing relations (Amaral, Jones & Karseth, 2002), in what Ball (2010) describes as a shift from 'government' to 'governing'. While some scholars have viewed this as a kind of 'destatization' (Larbi, 1999), others have described it rather as "a new form of 'experimental' and 'strategic' governance that is based upon network relations within and across new policy communities, designed to generate new governing capacity and enhance legitimacy" (Ball, 2010, p. 157).

Moreover, NPM implies the adoption of private-sector management techniques to reform public administration (Larbi, 2003) as a reaction to criticism by public-choice theorists that governments lacked cost consciousness because of the weak links between costs and outputs (Niskanen, 1968). Accordingly, state (and supranational) concerns with quality, value for money, efficiency and effectiveness have emerged in recent years, with a consequent intervention in the affairs of universities (Becher & Trowler, 2001). Hood (1991) outlines the key mechanisms associated with this change as: hands-on professional management, explicit standards and measures of performance, greater emphasis on output controls, shift to disaggregation of units in the public sector, shift to greater competition, stress on private sector styles of management practice and a stress on greater discipline and parsimony in resource use.

In terms of HE, NPM reforms have been achieved mainly through: the introduction of new degree systems; increasing enrolments; reforming curricula to meet to the needs of the labour market; including an emphasis on transferable skills; diversifying institutional forms, missions, funding bases; changing the mode of knowledge production towards transdisciplinarity and cooperation; increasing competitive behaviour not only within but also between national systems (Nokkala, 2007); as well as the creation of stronger leadership structures, and systems for institutional evaluation and accreditation through the establishment of quality assurance agencies across the continent "in order to turn the institutions into dynamic, entrepreneurial, high quality enterprises" (Bleiklie, 2005, p. 32).

It is important to note that this shift in policy is demonstrated on two levels: firstly, that of a *rhetorical* change, a new discourse of marketization in which citizens are now customers - thus redefining key relationships and activities in terms of market exchange - as well as a consequent emergence of a new managerial 'governance culture'; and secondly, on a *substantive* level of new management, governance and funding mechanisms that promote market-like competition and the associated reorganisation of universities, away from a conception in which they are regarded as a public institutions within a political, and planned, system (Bargh, Scott & Smith, 1996, p. 3).

In terms of how these shifts manifest in recognisable policies, a number of authors have described an increasingly coherent HE agenda at the European level (e.g. Corbett, 2005; 2011; Maassen & Musselin 2009; Gornitzka 2010). Indeed, in Europe one can talk about two separate, yet intimately interrelated processes that co-exist and have driven, and continue to drive, a reform of the overall HE system: the Bologna Process and the EU's Lisbon Strategy (and its successor, the Europe 2020 Strategy) both of which have had significant impact on HE systems and institutions (Vukasović, 2013).

Firstly, the two supranational EU strategies outline an agenda for the modernisation of Europe's HE systems. It has its origins in the Lisbon European Council of March 2000 at which heads of state and government committed themselves to a growth and jobs strategy driven by innovation, vowing to make "the EU the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world, capable of sustainable economic growth, with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion" (European Council, 2000). Naturally, universities are instrumental players in the

realisation of these goals. Consequently, the EU has sought greater coordination between industry, governments and universities, as well as between European HE systems.

The other is the Bologna process, which is separate from the EU strategies. The reforms inspired by the Bologna process constitute an effort to organise the diversity in Europe within a more coherent and compatible European framework, creating a competitive EHEA, within which transferability and comparability of qualifications would be achieved to promote mobility and drive growth (EHEA, 2014). An intergovernmental process involving 47 countries, it was established in 1999 with the signing of the Bologna declaration by ministers responsible for HE. Since then, a number of communiqués have added goals and a number of stakeholders have been introduced to the process, most notably the European Commission.

From these two main pillars the *Europe of Knowledge* emerges (Corbett, 2005; Vukasović, 2013); a neo-liberally inspired agenda for HE and universities.

### 3.3. Impact on University Integration

Neo-institutionalism proposes an interdependent dynamic between the university and its environment, which asserts coercive, mimetic, and normative pressures (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). Accordingly, universities are compelled to shift their structural and resources commitments (Gumport, 2000); as Pineirho (2013, p. 147) explains:

Universities operate in highly institutionalized environments characterized by the proliferation of formal and informal rules and standard operating procedures. As open systems, their structures and activities are susceptible of being influenced by dominant (macro-level) features prevalent across the organizational field of HE. Such predominant features—scripts, templates, blueprints, etc.—provide university actors with guidance on how to: (a) go about their daily activities; (b) operate within the field; and (c) relate to the outside world.

Accordingly, these policies have imbued the university with new functions and roles in the system. Universities have become important foci of attention in governance arrangements. As such, the European policy discourse confers a new notion to the university, which is assumed to be a ‘complete’ organisational actor (de Boer et al., 2007). Concretely, some policy ideas from the *Europe of Knowledge* which support the claim that universities must now act as integrated organisational actors are laid out in *Appendix one*.

Such a notion makes it easy for policy makers to share both the responsibility and the problems (de Boer et al., 2007) that come with global competition, increased social demands, growing participation costs and scarce resources.

The author further argues that the approach to systemic and institutional governance inherent in the emerged policies have altered the legitimating idea of public HE, which is now less of a social institution and more of an industry (Gumport, 2000). In order to compete in this new global education market (Marginson, 2006), the reimagining and reconstruction the university as an organisational actor again prevails (Nokkala, 2007). This is further elaborated by de Boer et al. (2007, p. 31):

Markets need actors, individuals and organizations, that can buy and sell, produce and consume. At the organizational level, universities have in the past not been perceived as producers competing for costumers. ...substantial state-funded growth in HE dampened any need for organizational competition among universities. Thus the capacity of most organizations to compete was limited in practical terms. Models such as the service university or the entrepreneurial university signal changes in the beliefs about the role of

the university in the market place...In this context the transformation of the university into a 'corporate actor' is thought of as a necessity in order to stimulate market mechanisms. In summary, a number of elements of the new governance philosophy coincide with arguments towards the transformation of the university as a corporate actor in the coordination of HE.

So the university emerges as an important player in this new HE system, in which it must act as an “*integrated*, goal-oriented entity that deliberately chooses its own actions and that can thus be held responsible for what it does” (Krücken & Meier 2006, p. 241). A good example of the crystallisation of this new neo-liberal legitimating idea of the university can be seen in the *Glasgow Declaration* (EUA, 2005), in which the European University Association (EUA) calls for ‘Strong Universities for a Strong Europe’, emphasising the development of “differentiated missions and profiles to address responsibly the challenges of global competition and social cohesion...and the importance of improving governance and strengthening leadership at all levels” (EUA, 2005, p. 1).

However, reducing the various approaches to HE in the European discourse into predominant institutional logics and policy narratives risks losing a more nuanced view of educational agendas. Indeed, many policy actors, such as the Council of Europe and student unions, have been arguing for recognition of the full range of educational purposes, including the more intrinsic value of HE (Zgaga, 2011). The Bologna Process, comprising a diverse group of countries and participating institutional actors, has never lost sight of this diversity of purpose and organisational forms. Accordingly, the EU’s Education & Training 2020 Programme has followed suit and also seeks to promote ‘equity, social cohesion and active citizenship’ as well as ‘enhancing creativity and innovation’ (European Commission, 2013).

But the discussion is focused on the strong, and arguably predominant, neo-liberal market discourses and the associated ‘policies of integration’, the implications of which have not been without criticism, as Gumpert (2000, p. 67) elucidates:

While public universities and colleges have increasingly come to rely on market discourse and managerial approaches in order to demonstrate responsiveness to economic exigencies, they may end up losing legitimacy as they move away from their historical character, functions, and accumulated heritage as educational institutions. Thus, responsiveness to compelling economic pressures that dominate contemporary organizational imperatives in an attempt to gain legitimacy in one dimension may result in loss for another. Wholesale adaptation to market pressures and managerial rationales could thereby subsume the discourse about the future of colleges and universities within a logic of economic rationality at a detriment to the longer-term educational legacies and democratic interests.

### **3.3.1. Unpacking University Integration**

It is pertinent at this stage to step back and define what is understood by the term *integration*.

The author attentions that conceptualisations of organisational/university integration predominantly stem from Western Europe and the U.S. So as to better understand the meanings and implications of university integration in Slovenia, the idiosyncrasies of this regional context will be outlined in section 3.4.

Furthermore, discursively predominant conceptualisations of university integration often emanate from management and public administration literature. However, the concept can be analysed from a richer array of perspectives, including sociology, philosophy, political and

educational sciences, law, etc. The author will therefore attempt to capture this richness in the ensuing description.

At the most fundamental level, definitions of integration assume two main points: that a single, complex *system* exists; and that the composite components can be optimally mixed to form an integral, and thus more effective, *whole*.

From an organisational theory standpoint, integration is an attempt to re-define the organisational field. In other words, universities and their constituents exist and operate within a field of activity; a set of organisations or individuals, often with different purposes, “that are recognized as participants in the same debate surrounding specific issues, plus those concerned with the reproduction of institutional practices or arrangements related to the matter” (Machado-da-Silva, 2006, p. 35). These sets of actors can be “formed by relational networks that are commonly integrated and intertwined, emerging as structured and structuring environments for organizations and individuals” (Machado-da-Silva, 2006, p. 35).

However, these networks, structures, cultures and practices can be transformed - the constituent parts combined to form an ‘integral whole’ - in a variety of ways. Thus, no one model of integration exists. Rather, *how universities do integration is highly contingent upon context*.

Context, in turn, comprises idiosyncratic institutional governance arrangements. Thus, a lot of attention has been turned to experimenting with internal arrangements for administering institutional behaviour (OECD, 2008). In HE studies, this has led to a proliferation of new university models (e.g. Bleiklie, 1994; Clark, 1998; Marginson & Considine, 2000; Tjeldvoll, 1997; Jongbloed & Goedegebuure 2001; Krücken & Meier, 2006), which broadly narrate a shift from a loosely-coupled community of scholars to a more tightly-coupled, strategic organisational actor.

Rather than simply recapitulate the numerous models, it may be more useful to provide a conceptualisation of the various elements of university integration. Accordingly, the author distinguishes between *vertical* and *horizontal* integration.

But firstly, an explanatory note must first be made. In discussing these various aspects of integration, a description of the opposing concept (i.e. fragmentation) is unavoidable and indeed useful, as it illuminates the concept of integration by providing a contrary image; a kind of negative dialectic<sup>1</sup>. Indeed, scholars as far back as Kant (1799/1798, p. 31) have described division as an intrinsic part of the university:

Whenever a man-made institution is based on an Idea of reason ...we can take it for granted that the experiment was made according to some principle contained in reason... And a plan of this sort makes a certain kind of division necessary. We can therefore assume that the organization of a university into ranks and classes did not depend entirely on chance.

### *Horizontal Integration*

The horizontal feature of university integration relates to cultural and material practices that are specialised, or what Bernstein (1999, p. 159) describes as “segmentally organised”. For example, *administrative* functions (e.g. HR and finance) can be conceptualised along a horizontal axis, the specialist knowledge pertaining to these functions being “segmentally differentiated”. The same

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<sup>1</sup> Dialectic is an analytical method, popular in Central European and Asian philosophy, which helps a person to understand the nature of something by providing a contrary concept. Through disagreement and rational discussion one arrives at a synthesis, an enlightened outcome (Zuidervaat, 2011; Corbett & Robert, 1999).

applies to *academic* disciplines (e.g. between history and biotechnology), as well as to the roles of organisations within a wider organisational field (e.g. between universities and a research institutes). Horizontal integration is therefore about reducing such fragmentation between specialist groups of actors *within* the university and between the university and *external* organisational actors.

Administrative integration implies professionalised personnel who work across the entire organisation providing functional services, which are strategically coordinated and aligned. According to neo-liberal policy agendas, such specialists form a strengthened managerial centre, which is assumed as a necessary response to increased institutional autonomy and accountability (Sporn, 2003; McMaster, 2007). This has manifested in the notion of ‘shared services’, in which professionalised functions (e.g. HR, Finance, Institutional Research, Quality, Student Affairs, Marketing, etc.) are provided on a *university-wide* basis from a centralised structure. Relatedly, a kind of *functional integration* has also emerged (Zgaga et al., 2013), in which functions previously distributed throughout the university are combined for greater utility. However, this is usually realised with a lesser degree of centralised control and holistic alignment.

Furthermore, Bernstein’s description of ‘organisationally segmented’ practices is highly relevant to the *academic* core of universities. Indeed, universities as organisations have been characterised as ‘loosely-coupled’ (Birnbaum, 1988; Weick, 1982), representing a horizontally fragmented notion of the university in which academic ‘tribes and territories’ (Becher & Trowler, 2001) are split along disciplinary lines into various forms of organisational structure: departments, research centres, faculties, schools, etc. (Pinheiro & Stensaker, 2013). Accordingly, power and authority are dispersed among a republic of scholars (Bleiklie & Kogan, 2007), who are self-regulating rather than managed (Nokkala, 2007).

Thus, horizontal integration is about fusing these segments, represented by a ‘tighter coupling’ of these academic ‘tribes and territories’. This represents a notion of the university as a unified forum for scholarly exchange, which integrates disciplinary and epistemological diversity. Such a notion is reflected in the dominant neo-liberal discourse, which emphasises interdisciplinarity.

Hints of this type of integration are alluded to as early as Kant (1797/1798, p. 23), who explains: “[the university] handles the entire content of learning (really, the thinkers devoted to it)... and all of these together would form a kind of learned community called a university”. Indeed, some etymological accounts assert that the word ‘university’ itself stems from the Latin ‘universitas’, meaning ‘all of you’ or ‘the whole’ (Oxford Dictionaries, 2014). Furthermore, Turner (2011, p. 9) argues that the modern use of the term university “derives from the thirteenth century papal provision that a body of scholars...could make collective representation to the papal court. This meant that the university could have an idea, present a position, provide an analysis or make a case *collectively*”<sup>2</sup> (Turner, 2011, p. 9).

However, inherent in these accounts is a dialectical relationship between faculties, in which a learned community disputes and discusses ideas, offering epistemological diversity. This is still seen today in the fierce rhetoric between disciplines, between policy makers and politicians, as to ontological significance, utility and relevance of certain faculties of knowledge in modern society (Nussbaum, 2010).

Horizontal integration implies a new mode of knowledge production (Gibbons et al., 1994); away from a more traditional, investigator-initiated and discipline-based approach, towards the

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<sup>2</sup> This provision was not established to provide greater strategic and organisational agility of the university, rather to provide anonymity and protection to the individuals within the university, making it possible for them to make daring, risky or socially provocative speculations.

application of knowledge, transdisciplinarity, social accountability and reflexivity; i.e. a more integrated, borderless approach. In an institutional context this means the growth of multi-functionality, which involves developing links with new clients, the establishment of new entities and modes of coordination, changes to scientific career paths, loss of clear-cut boundaries between the scientific elite and the rest, diversification of funding, which brings complex, extra-scientific sets of criteria related to social and economic as well as scientific priorities, relevance, accountability, increased competition and cooperation, fuzzy disciplinary boundaries, from disciplines to organisational units based on thematic areas and ‘grand challenges’, from closed institutions to open networks, and socially distributed knowledge production (Gibbons et al. 1994).

Also included within this concept is the *external* element of horizontal integration. As other organisations encroach upon the university’s elite status as the sole producer of scientific knowledge (Batsedo, 2012), their roles overlap, and borders between knowledge producing organisations are blurred. As Etzkowitz (2003) notes, “sources of innovation are increasingly interdependent, transformed from a core of actors relying on their internal processes to one that takes place among firms and between firms and knowledge-producing institutions” Universities become part of an open system of knowledge production (Freeman, 1987; Lundvall, 1992), in which heterogeneity, interconnectedness and organizational diversity are common, and the university is socially accountable (Gibbons et al., 1994; Ramirez & Christensen, 2013).

### *Vertical Integration*

Bernstein (1999, p. 159) also distinguishes a vertical axis of material and cultural practices that form a “coherent, explicit, and systematically principled structure, hierarchically organised, or series of specialised *modus operandi*”. For universities, this refers to: firstly, the strategic alignment, again of both the internal members and of the university within the wider organisational field; and secondly, in order to achieve this strategic alignment, a new kind of rationalised institutional governance arrangement is needed, reshaping historical power relationships.

Firstly, strategic actorhood of universities is inherent in the neo-liberal, globalised HE policies (Krücken et al., 2009), which requires the aligned vision and activities of the entire organisational body. Universities must be able to “identify areas of high priority and move resources there. [Universities] cannot be strong and successful if it is impossible for them to determine strategy, set priorities, identify teaching and research portfolios, and adapt their organisational structure to adjust to a changing environment” (OECD, 2008, p. 108).

Vertical integration can therefore be considered a result of external pressures; a reaction to politically or socially imposed demands requiring a strategic response. Moreover, this response endeavours not only to strategically align the internal actors, but also the university with its *external* environment (OECD, 2008, p. 136-7):

One simple way to encourage institutions to more deliberately contribute to the goals of the tertiary system would be for the tertiary education authorities to require all institutions in receipt of public funding to prepare, and regularly update, meaningful strategic plans aligned with the national tertiary education strategy. These would be submitted both as a basis for general accountability and to bid for targeted funding...As well as their intrinsic value..., the process of preparing strategic plans could be a helpful catalyst in increasing staff and student commitment to their institution and its future – and strengthening their own place in it – and in highlighting issues in governance and management which need to be addressed.



Accordingly, strategic actorhood implies the rationalisation of governance structures and a reshuffling of internal hierarchies within the university. Indeed, the production of strategic documents “often serves as a legitimating base for management-by-objectives tools, which aim at strengthening the link between the organization and its individual members” (Krücken et al., 2009, p. 5). Thus, hierarchical power relations are strengthened to transform the historical ‘bottom-heavy’ governance arrangement of the university. As Douglass (2012) notes, “This seems to point to greater centralization of authority and perhaps the promise of greater cohesion within university communities, even if one result is the infiltration of private sector acumen about budgets and operations that some may not find completely admirable”.

The phenomenon of bolstering managerial control and responsibility within universities has long been observed in the wider public sector as ‘new managerialism’ (Clarke & Newman, 1994). Not only has this led to the professionalisation of administration, but it has also threatened the legitimacy and historical dominance of the Academy (Fitzsimons, 1999). New managerialism therefore signifies a shift in power from the academe to the professional manager and seeks to legitimise the control of individuals and organisations in the interests of efficiency and effectiveness (Fitzsimons, 1999). This includes new techniques for coordination, such as: the use of internal cost centres; the fostering of competition between employees; the marketization of public sector services; and the monitoring of efficiency and effectiveness through measurement of outcomes and individual staff performances (Deem, 1998), particularly pertinent in an environment where universities are increasingly subject to quality metrics and global rankings.

Thus, the notion of ‘academic capitalism’ - defined as the involvement of colleges and faculty in market-like behaviours (Slaughter & Leslie, 1997) - is one way in which actors have responded to such new institutional logics and power relations. Indeed, these changes have meant that “knowledge, theory, expertise and altruism are not enough; organizational, political, and economic skills are equally, if not more, important”, in order to “to gain a greater degree of control over their work lives and income streams” (Slaughter & Leslie, 1997, p. 140). Consequently, individual academics must be what Gewirtz et al. (1995) have described as ‘bi-lingual’. In other words, they must be conversant in the language of academia as well as the language of management. Such notions help to bridge differing values, cultures and logics towards a kind of tepid co-existence, in which individual actors can invoke either ‘language’ as appropriate.

In sum, the key elements of the new integrated university are presented in *table 1* below, alongside the ‘traditional’ university:

**Table 1: The Integrated University**

Organisational dimension	‘Traditional’ university	Integrated university
Work Integration	Loose-Coupling	Tight coupling: a) internally (sub-units & activities); b) externally (links with society)
Governance model	Collegial and democratic (Bottom-heavy)	Executive: strong steering core (central & unit levels)
Goals and identity	Multiple, conflicting goals & identities	Coherent institutional profile & unitary organizational identity
Core functions & mission	Teaching & research	Teaching, research & third mission
Dominant normative Ethos	Academic freedom	Strategic science & user-inspired basic research

Adapted from Pinheiro & Stensaker (2013)

To finish on a contradictory note, this new marketised model has also been described as a ‘devolution of the university’ into cost centres, in which the rationalisation of the Academy has resulted in differing market opportunities and associated costs among different university members (e.g. the tuition price of an MBA versus an English PhD), thus *increasing* the degree of university *fragmentation* (Douglas, 2012). The implications of which Douglass (2012) further elaborates on:

It might mean, for example, that despite the tricky problems posed by tenure, some subset of academic programs may increasingly appear as expendable; that faculty salaries will become increasingly differentiated; that the profit and loss centers, and prestige faculty and departments, will become more pronounced. It means that the idea of the comprehensive university, with a broad array of disciplines, and with quality across the board, will be an increasingly rare or at least a difficult-to-achieve commodity.

It is therefore pertinent to issue a warning at this stage: the benefits of integration are neither guaranteed nor absolute. In vogue, normative opinions about the desirability of embarking on a course of integration should be approached with caution. Indeed, integration often rubs against historical and contextual notions of autonomy, academic freedom and the university as a ‘republic of scholars’ (Gumport, 2000; Bleiklie & Kogan, 2007). Integration may upset this balance of freedom and equality. The resultant friction has the potential to alter the desired outcomes of integration, and the expected value of a more closely integrated institution may be minimised.

### 3.3.2. The Integrated University Archetype in the European Policy Context

This conceptualisation of university integration is evident in the emergent European HE policies. Indeed, the description of integration presents an ‘organisational archetype’ (Greenwood & Hinings, 1996), what Nokkala (2007) describes to as the ‘ideal university’ that can be found in the dominant European discourses.

Rather than simply repeat the various aspects of university integration, only a brief summary of the emerged integrated university archetype inherent in the European HE policies is warranted. This can be found in *table 2*, below:

**Table 2: The Implied European University Archetype**

Dimension	European University Archetype as per Emergent Policies
State/university relationship	Work conditions standardized at the political level; stronger role of central authorities in the determination of university objectives and modes of working; introduction of macro steering mechanisms
Identity	University profiling; strategic actorhood; transdisciplinarity
Governance structures	Private-sector managerial mechanisms; strong steering core; creation of powerful managerial infrastructures; weakening of collegial structures; firmer top-down grip on internal organizational processes.
Decision making	Executive; more hierarchical structures for leaders to enforce strategic decisions; the power of academically dominated senates paralleled or replaced by councils, boards or trustees; increased stakeholder involvement; institutional leaders now executives
Basis of legitimacy	Competitive knowledge society; neo-liberal discourse; societal embeddedness
Administration	Creation of new professional structures for economic development, marketing, quality assurance, international connections, etc.; increased devolved responsibilities for budgeting, recruitment and organizational development

Sources: Bleiklie & Kogan, 2007; Nokkala, 2007; Krücken et al., 2013; Pineirho & Stensaker, 2013

The author concedes that the description is a highly generalised picture of what is a more nuanced reality. Indeed, how policies of integration are enacted is by no means uniform, as global (read European) scripts are locally translated in idiosyncratic ways (Czarniawska-Joerges & Sevón, 2005). Reforms in the public sector that seek more integrated organisations tend to include combinations of these elements, and it is rare to find any organisational reform that seeks to reconstruct all of the dimensions of the integrated university archetype (Brunsson & Sahlin-Andersson, 2000).

Indeed, the characteristics of the new integrated university can be thought of as ‘policy ideology’. As Bleiklie & Kogan (2007, p. 478) point out: “In order to understand the extent of change beyond the initial ideological shift, one must observe actual structures and behaviour at various levels within HE institutions”. This thesis will, therefore, look more closely at how universities in Slovenia interpret and enact policies of integration in section 4.

### 3.3.3. Interpreting and Enacting: Theories of Change

The process of converting policies of integration into actual structures and behaviour at various levels within universities can be thought of as a process of organisational change. A brief exploration of theories of change will therefore be presented in order to gain an appreciation of the myriad of complex ways in which integration can be interpreted and enacted.

Universities do not have the best reputations when it comes to change. As Kezar (2012, p. 181) points out, “It is commonly assumed that change in HE is infrequent, slow, and labour-intensive. Change related to faculty is often described as ‘herding cats’”. Indeed, the very notion of the university as an institution implies a perpetuation of taken-for-granted, socially-ascribed roles, legitimisations, norms and activities (Nokkala, 2007). Despite this common view, it is evident that change does occur in universities. “One only needs to look at the history of HE worldwide...to see the vast array of changes: the institutional types that have emerged, the shift in curriculum, the different types of students, and the new missions that have developed over time; colleges and universities are anything but static institutions” (Kezar, 2012, p. 181).

But how such change processes manifest themselves is neither clear nor predictable. The literature on change presents a plethora of paradigms, schools of thought and theories, which provide insights into the various nuances of this elusive process. Kezar (2001; 2012) distinguishes four paradigms on change, with differing underlying assumptions that shape the study and theorisation of change, the questions asked, methodology and focus, definitions, and outcomes (Collins, 1998); namely, *functionalist*, *interpretive*, *critical* and *postmodern*. These paradigms offer a neat framework to capture how universities do policy-related change.

Firstly, functionalist theories represent the most common perspective. They treat organisations as rational entities, according to which the efficiency and effectiveness of change processes can be improved through studying causal relationships between phenomena and drawing on empirical evidence (rather than conceptual arguments). Change is a discoverable, observable, and measurable phenomenon, which can be predicted and is episodic (Kazar, 2012). Many leaders, policy makers and practitioners favour this paradigm, as it offers a measurable, pragmatic and optimistic view of change, in which concrete processes can be prescribed and rolled out, such as strategic planning, business process reengineering, university profiling, quality assurance systems, mergers and restructures, etc. Indeed, one need only adjust the *structure*, *strategy* and *control mechanisms* to achieve the desired outcome (Tushman & Romanelli, 1985).

The author argues that many of the assumptions found in policy and governance trends take a functionalist perspective, in which quantifiable, evidence-based reports, studies, rankings, benchmarking and other such initiatives form a technocratic basis, which legitimises emergent

policies that call for stronger, integrated universities. Indeed, as Nokkala (2007, p. 49) remarks, “many of the new university structures, procedures and activities, such as quality assurance systems and managerial procedures, commercial activities and orientation towards efficiency, competitiveness and internationality, represent legitimate organisational aims, accompanied by technologies such as marketing, quality assurance and internationalisation activities, which are seen as legitimate means to achieve those ends”.

Secondly, the interpretive paradigm focuses on the roles that perspectives, beliefs, culture, language, and meaning play in the change process (Kazar, 2012). This paradigm goes to the very heart of the policy trajectory approach, which asserts that policy, systemic and institutional directives and materials are made reality by the subjectivities of individuals (Ball et al., 2012). These subjectivities do not assume a rational and obedient interpretation of policy aligned with the policies’ intention. Indeed, policy makers do not normally take account of the complexity of institutional fields in which policy is interpreted and enacted (Ball et al., 2012). Rather, “actors interpret policy texts, drawing upon a variety of resources in making their ‘readings’ and interpretations. Individuals bring their own experiences, scepticisms and critiques to bear on what they see/read/are exposed to and will read policies from positions of their identities and subjectivities, thus enactments will be influenced by these different readings and are likely to diverge” (Ball et al., 2012).

The third paradigm relates to critical theory, which examines the role of power, interest, and conflict in change processes (Kazar, 2012). Such theories tend to question the underlying (instrumentalist) motives of functionalist approaches to change, in which top-down initiatives are critiqued as imperialistic or culturally domineering (Grubbs, 2000) or divorced from those that have to implement and live with such changes (Kazar, 2012). Indeed, the policy process is shaped to some extent by discourse and power (Ball et al., 2012), rather than bottom-up evolution. For example, Zgaga (2013b) discusses the migration of policy narratives from dominant centres to ‘receptive’ peripheries, with consequent disparities between international norms and local identities. The critical paradigm questions the sources of such changes and examines issues of personal interest and utility maximisation (Spillane, 2004) and the ways in which policy promoters achieve their desired results (Foucault, 1991). March & Olsen (2006) further refer to the logic of “outcomes” or “means ends rationality” to explain the agency of social positions. Questions arise as to the roles, interests and perspectives of key actors, both in determining *and* reacting to change. Rationales may be reimagined to suit the interests of those involved, allowing not only for manipulation but also for recipients to avoid responsibility and perpetuate preferred practices (Spillane, 2004). Thus power is viewed not only as top-down, but also as relational and situated (Ball et al., 2012).

Finally, postmodernism reframes change as ongoing and fluid (Kazar, 2012), in which static and structured views of organisations and change processes are socially-constructed (Hassard & Parker, 1993) and should be viewed with scepticism. Indeed, definite conceptions of change processes enable control by elites and limit individual creativity and freedom (Berquist, 1993). Accordingly, institutional reality is rather more complex and undefinable, influenced by ongoing, conditioned behaviours, sense-making (Weick, 1995), and the strategic choices of constituents (Kazar, 2012). Indeed, socially-constructed narratives are particularly pertinent to HE, as Ylijoki (2005, p. 560) explains: “academia embraces a rich, historically constructed stock of narratives – nostalgia represents an important form of institutional remembering and forgetting”. Thus, nostalgia represents a more fluid interpretation of what an organisation is and would like to be rather than an absolute reality.

### 3.4. The Case of Slovenia

In order to more tangibly comprehend the diffusion of policies of integration, this thesis focuses on a national case; that of Slovenia.

As Ball et al. (2012, p. 21) point out: “policies are enacted in material conditions, with varying resources, in relation to particular ‘problems’. Policies – new and old – are set against and alongside existing commitments, values and forms of experience”. Thus, an introduction to Slovenian HE is required in order to provide the requisite context for the analysis of how Slovenian universities interpret and enact policies of integration.

#### 3.4.1. A Higher Education System ‘in Transition’

The period since Slovenia’s independence from former Yugoslavia in 1991 has seen major changes to its society and economy. On top of socio-political change, forces of globalisation, Europeanization and the emerging ‘knowledge economy’ had to be accommodated (Zgaga, 2009). This consequently resulted in broad reforms in HE, which were in fact set in motion already during the 1980s (Vukasović et al., 2009) when “fundamental ideas and major agents of social and political changes developed progressively... accompanied by reformist and liberal tendencies obvious in politics and economy” (Zgaga, 2007, p. 3).

Subsequently, challenges particular to HE were massification, quality issues, decreased funding, the rise of private institutions, introduction of fees for some courses of study, recognition of the need to cooperate internationally, Europeanization, EU accession and education diplomacy, the Bologna Process, and new forms of cross border communication and policy transfer spurred by the ‘open method of coordination’ (Zgaga, 2009).

The reforms have two primary aspects: firstly, one can view the shift through a socio-political lens associated with the period of independence. This includes system level reform and reconstruction; secondly, a shift through the lens of globalisation and European integration and the associated measures brought about by the Bologna Process.

Firstly, new government machinery was required; a legal framework to stabilise and regulate the HE system in a period of intense ‘modernisation’. Thus, a new HE Act was passed in 1993 to provide a general framework for system-level reform and reconstruction. It still forms the basis of the current legislative environment. The basic principles were (Zgaga, 1998):

- autonomy of universities
- creation of a buffer body
- democratic and self-organized academic communities
- increased accessibility
- quality control and assurance
- legal integration of the university
- delineation of responsibilities
- Higher Education Master Plan
- systematic integration of teaching and research
- diversification

An important point in the context of this thesis is that Slovenia was lucky enough to address conceptual issues - such as university integration - relatively early compared to other countries of former Yugoslavia (Zgaga et al., 2013). Legally at least, universities became unified, autonomous institutions. However, faculties still retained autonomy to generate and spend income independently.

After this period of system reconstruction, the Bologna Process and greater international and European cooperation came into focus in the late 1990s. This has meant a governing ethos inspired by European trends including introducing the efficiency of the market, making institutions more autonomous, innovative and responsive to the market, opening up the market to new private sector providers, increasing student participation and constraining government costs.

Importantly, Europeanisation also meant structural adjustments, particularly as a result of the Bologna Process to which Slovenia was a signatory as early as 1999. Legislative amendments were thus made to “allow for the modernisation of HE, taking into account the development trends and expectations of society, the implementation of the Bologna process, the establishment of a comparable European quality assurance system and the recommendations and initiatives of the European Community on a common EHEA” (CMEPIUS, 2011, p. 5).

However, Zgaga et al. (2013, p. 16) provide the caveat that “there is much evidence that the desire to ‘Europeanise’ the system overnight too often resulted in ‘cosmetic changes’ and not in a substantial and strategic conversion. There is also much evidence that, at least at the beginning of this period, bottom-up incentives to modernise either curricula or governance models at the level of institutions were particularly strong”.

In total, these changes represent a migration from a state-centred system of self-managing academic communities, to a more decentralised governance arrangement with increased institutional autonomy, and new university-member relations.

### **3.4.2. Status Quo**

After such a tremendous transformation and growth of the HE sector, the number of students participating in HE is levelling off (MoES, 2011). Moreover, the tertiary attainment rate is almost at 40%, above the EU average (OECD, 2012a). Coupled with a decrease in the number of young people demographically (MoES, 2011), the sector is at a turning point in Slovenia. Indeed, many indicators lead one to the conclusion that HE in Slovenia is entering another transition; a transition from a ‘growth’ to a ‘mature’ sector.

Accordingly, a ‘mature’ HE sector often loses ground compared to demands for funding of healthcare, transportation, prisons, etc. “Long accustomed to being viewed as a ‘growth’ industry, HE must now compete with other compelling claims on the nation’s resources” (Leontiades, 2007), which is particularly challenging in time of fiscal crises and government austerity. Indeed, in many developed countries we see a new kind of NPM (Berg, 2012), whereby mature public sectors are subject to increased governmental control. “It asks hard questions about efficiency, productivity, and effectiveness. It tends to reduce autonomy, increase regulation, and demand greater accountability” (Levine, 1997), which compel universities to operate in a more efficient and integrated manner.

### **3.4.3. Imperfect Unity in the Western Balkans**

However, this new organisational field, with strong forces shaping university integration, is particularly challenging for countries whose historical legacies significantly differ in terms of both how the university is imagined and organised. Slovenia is a case in point.

An important historical and political root with significant implications for university integration is the Yugoslav system of workers’ self-management. Established in 1953 by the Tito government, workers’ self-management underwent a number of phases with differing legislative and organisational iterations (Hillman & Milanovic, 1992). However, the basic premise was to

give workers democratic control in the daily activity of work. This represents a highly decentralised approach to structuring and organising society and its institutions, in contrast with Soviet-style central planning and management. Liotta (2001) further explains:

This Yugoslav self-management was, in theory at least, akin to democracy—tied to the tenet that basic decisions would be made by the workers who would have to carry out such decisions or be most affected by them. Worker's councils, composed of as many as 50 individuals in large factories, represented the “will” of the worker... The worker's council was the basic operations unit—deciding what and whom to pay, what wages to give, how best to reallocate profits after taxes and operating costs were made.

Thus, ‘workplace democracy’ was seen as an alternative to a bureaucratic, centralised form of organisation. But like all democracies, this meant a significant degree of political behaviour. Indeed, the workers’ councils operated within a kind of ‘socialist market economy’, in which competition guided both domestic and international exchange and production (Estrin, 1991). Furthermore, it can be argued that despite the democratic rhetoric, workers were still excluded from significant decisions, which remained in the hands of a select group of directors and politicians (Liotta, 2010). Consequently, towards the break-up of former Yugoslavia, strikes were frequent and widespread (Lydall, 1989). Thus, harmonic cooperation between and within workers’ councils was not a reality; the *modus operandi* political rather than bureaucratic. Fragmentation at a system level was characteristic.

This kind of ‘industrial democracy’ is mirrored in the traditional organisation of the Slovenian university, which was divided into distinct self-managing entities. In other words, the traditional institutional structure of Slovenian universities consisted of powerful, legally autonomous faculties under the symbolic umbrella of public universities. And like workers’ self-management, these independent university members exhibited a high degree of political behaviour: “in former decades, walls of the university members [were] fortified so much that the definition of scientific disciplines became a matter of the internal (re)distribution of power” (Zgaga, 2007, p. 8).

Thus, the traditional Slovenian university can be characterised as ‘weakly -coupled’ (Zgaga, 1996) rather than as complete legal, organisational or sociological entities. Mencinger (2000, as cited by Brennan, 2005, p. 54) gives the example of the University of Ljubljana:

the University of Ljubljana...was a loose association, the components of which were legal entities. The latter were financed directly by the state for their activities in education and basic research and were completely independent in regard to their market activities. The central University had no control over the budgets of these units, and the Office of the Rector (the university administration) existed to perform only those functions that were transferred to it by these units, this giving it a mere representative role.

Furthermore, these independent faculties cannot be considered faculties in the traditional university sense, i.e. smaller societies, each comprising the university specialists in one main branch of learning (Kant, 1797/1798). Rather, the author argues that these faculties were ‘universities’ unto themselves, comprised of a diversity of academic ‘tribes and territories’ and self-governing units.

This regional idiosyncrasy resulted in weak institutional integration and a significant variance in funding and quality among these entities (Zgaga, 1996; Huisman & Vrečko, 2003). The institutions were bottom heavy with decentralised resource management (Zgaga, 1998). Brennan (2005, p. 54-55) again describes this institutional dynamic:

...institutional levels of authority in universities during the communist period were mainly weak. In terms of Becher and Kogan’s four levels of authority in HE (central authorities, institutions, basic units, individual academics), institutions were the weakest

link in a context where all process frequently mediated by influence from party officials...Within this situation, and reflecting Humboldtian legacies, individual professors – providing they were senior and well-connected enough – could enjoy considerable freedoms and privileges.

Finally, contributing to this historical legacy is the fact that the modern university is still a relatively new addition to Slovenia (UL, 2014). Although HE institutions have been present in Slovenia since the time of the counter-reformation in the 16th century, the first modern university was not established until 1919 in Ljubljana. This remained the country's sole university until socio-economic development in the North-East of Slovenia warranted the establishment of a second university in 1975, the University of Maribor, which came into existence as a merger of six local polytechnics (Zgaga, 1996; Huisman & Vrečko, 2003).

As such, the 'academic tradition' that has developed can be described as a melange of imported and local 'norms' and cultures. Indeed, Slovenians studied at the universities of Vienna, Graz, Prague, Padua and Krakow right until the establishment of the University of Ljubljana (UL, 2014). So from the outset, the Slovenian Academy, returning from abroad, represented a diversity of geographical, cultural and social backgrounds; certainly not a unified and integrated community.

#### **3.4.4. Policies of Integration**

Slovenia has not been immune from changes in its European environment. As such, the transformation of the Slovenian HE sector is reminiscent of broader reforms and rationales in Europe. Consequently, policies impacting the integration of the university have emerged.

As mentioned, the neo-liberal policy environment established autonomous, legally-integrated universities, with strong expectations that the new entities would be stronger as a response to increased accountability attached to their new roles within the system. However, the traditional model of democratic self-managing communities was at odds with such political reforms. Thus, these changes came with significant new challenges (Zgaga, 2007, p. 8):

The legislative reform of HE..., which laid entirely new foundations for the operation of the universities...and especially the relations with the so-called members, turned the course of the academic life upside down. In this process, the problems of autonomy were manifoldly exposed. If during the period of forming the conceptual framework for the new law the notion of autonomy was predominantly linked to academic autonomy, those problems now include also the topics of administrative and financial autonomy.

Indeed, as the OECD (2012, p. 122) points out: "In a highly decentralised university system like Slovenia's, more is needed than a declaration of autonomy. It may seem paradoxical, but if autonomy is to result in better outcomes, a framework of legal and organisational structures and active ministry governance are essential... In short, the policy level has to define tasks and to enable the universities, via framework conditions and norms, to fulfil these tasks and become effectively autonomous".

Accordingly, attempts to strengthen and integrate the university have occurred at the national level (Zgaga et al., 2013). As such, HE policies have focused on increasing the internal and external efficiency of the system (Salmi & Hauptman, 2006).

Specifically, increasing internal efficiency of the sector means a focus on institutional development. This refers to increasing efficiency, reducing complexity and duplication, and increasing co-operation in terms of educational offerings (MoES, 2011). Tied to this is the need for flexible funding mechanisms, which allow universities to maximise their strategic actorhood



in pursuit of clearly defined missions (Marjetič, 2010), as well as providing for workable board structures, budgeting structures, frameworks for developmental plans, internationally open and active personnel recruitment and career tracks, evaluation principles, etc.

External efficiency is focused on relevance, taking a more utilitarian approach to HE in order to address socio-economic concerns. Thus, government policy has pushed for increased openness of universities to the community, more partnerships between universities and the economic sector, and a more focused effort to create new skills and jobs (MoES, 2011).

External efficiency is also concerned with quality, which is very much on the policy agenda in Slovenia. The government has sought to increase competition within the sector in an attempt to raise quality (Vukasović et al., 2009). Accordingly, private sector institutions have proliferated. The concern now is to raise the overall standards of the sector and address quality in terms of excellence (Marjetič, 2010).

Concretely, two key texts form the current policy basis for Slovenian HE; the HE Act (which has undergone a series of amendments since 1993) and the National Higher Education Programme 2011-2020 (NHEP). Although it must be pointed out that there are other important regulations that affect the HE landscape, which include: the law on professional and academic titles gained after completion of tertiary education, the law on the recognition and assessment of education gained abroad for the purpose of further education or employment, the law on research and development activities, the law on scholarships, and bilateral agreements or arrangements with individual countries, most of which relate to the possibility of student exchange (CMEPIUS, 2011, p. 5).

Specifically, *Appendix two* outlines selected examples of existing policy ideas that imply an integrated university. NHEP is particularly explicit in setting out a strategy that aims to integrate the university. The following excerpt (OECD, 2012b) provides a summary:

The funding system must introduce more block grants for universities plus a new developmental part of funding, i.e. a kind of incentive-based extra block funding element. This is to be accompanied by a higher degree of autonomy for universities: HEIs are to independently manage their tangible assets, autonomously prepare study programmes, set academic standards, select staff and students and form their own organisation, management and financial decision-making ... (and) have more influence on the selection of students, particularly for the second and third study cycle. Furthermore the strategy calls for a new career system, which delinks academic qualifications such as the Habilitation from job qualifications, thereby allowing universities' greater freedom for career development.

All of these policy agendas imply a more strategic and integrated university actor. Thus, one witnesses 'policies of integration' in the Slovenian context.

### **3.4.5. Challenges 'On the Ground'**

In this context, tensions emerge; between transnational influences and the Slovenian legacy; between international norms and local identities (Zgaga, 2013b). As such, the integration of universities has been fraught with challenges. While the author does not want to overstate the problem - as examples of good practice exist - commentators still describe a fragmented organisational reality. Although the formal changes in legislation and funding arrangements have occurred at the national level, implementation at the university level is less clear; laws intended to integrate institutions have not always been effective (Linden et al., 2008). Even at the legal level, some authors argue that the relevant law never intended to produce fully integrated institutions (Kwiek, 2007). Zgaga et al. (2013, p. 39-40) explain:

Our research results show that the ‘fragmented university’ is still persisting in the countries of former Yugoslavia and that there is not much motivation in academia to change this particular element of HE institutions’ governance. On the other hand, policy documents across the region stress it as an important issue in HE reforms...Slovenia is the only country where faculties are not their own full legal entity. However, in practice the situation is quite similar to other countries, at least at the flagship university... Some procedures like the transfer of public funds, the capacity to sign legal documents, internal quality assurance and communication with the government are arranged at the level of the university, but otherwise the faculties remain largely free.

The former Rector of UL, Jože Mencinger (2000; as cited by Brennan, 2005, p. 55), postulates as to why implementation has been challenging, thus: “The new arrangement has not been fully implemented for four major reasons: (i) resistance by the constituent units, especially those with a large proportion of market- oriented activities; (ii) the existing weak university level management that is unfit to undertake new tasks; (iii) absence of an appropriate management model; and (iv) the general belief shared by the present rector in the advantages of decentralised compared to centralised decision-making in management which can coincide with the integration of education and research”. However, the author cautions that such a critique is perhaps overly simplistic, academic and detached from Mencinger’s subsequent practical experience as Rector.

Yet such challenges are arguably exacerbated by the pre-reform era of university organisation, thus contributing “to the difficult process of integrating scattered and isolated academic atoms. This process is as much more difficult inasmuch as [the members’] positions in the power net of the former organization differed. This concerns not only the democratic relationships amongst the members but also the rest of the democratic academic atmosphere in which students and other staff participate” (Zgaga, 2007, p. 9). Accordingly, Zgaga et al. (2013, p. 45) point out three main barriers: “(1) the historical legacy of the relatively self-standing faculties; (2) the strong individual freedom of (senior) academics; and (3) the unwillingness of faculties to share the funds they have earned in the market”.

The author is keen to point out once again that, in Slovenia and at the level of the university, the situation regarding how integration has been interpreted and enacted is under-documented and under-researched. Therefore, this thesis intends to contribute to this gap.

### **3.4.6. External Discursive Pressures**

One may sense that university integration in Slovenia seems rather extraneous, given the contrary legacy of the Slovenian university and evidence to suggest an unwilling and awkward adoption of this concept. Such extraneous pressures warrant remark.

Indeed, global scripts interact in various ways with domestic contexts (Vukasović, 2013). The main carriers of such ideas are international and supranational organizations, like the EU, OECD, and the World Bank, as well as international consulting firms, “which [together] often seem to further homogeneous global [policy] ideas” (Ramirez & Christensen, 2013, p. 697)

This is significant for Slovenia, where discursive pressures to further integrate universities by influential international and supranational agencies are numerous, evidenced in a myriad of documents (e.g. Linden et al., 2008; European Commission, 2011; EUA, 2006 & 2013; WUS, 2010; OECD, 2012b). Indeed, a number of external commentators are quick to point out the problems associated with the legacy of autonomous faculties and to offer advice. For example, a report written for the World Bank (Linden et al., 2008, p. 14) states the limitations of Slovenia’s legacy in no uncertain terms:

The institutional structure of powerful, legally autonomous faculties...hampers the development of public universities... This structure has several drawbacks. It is inefficient, since each separate faculty offers a comprehensive set of courses (duplicating courses and programs offered by other faculties of the same university) and has its own administration. It is ineffective because good practices cannot spread across the institution, for example, with respect to quality assurance mechanisms, good teaching, or multidisciplinary courses. It is non-transparent because individual faculties (or their deans) lobby national parliaments to provide earmarked or additional revenues. The structure also creates opportunities for corrupt practices in the allocation of resources and student assessments. Finally and most importantly, the institutional structure prevents universities from creating a core identity and mission, through which their development can be mapped, comparative advantage pursued, and resources assigned.

In order to achieve such organisation integration, a number of policy and practical measures have been recommended. The OECD (2012, p. 126) recently suggested an *'agenda for a better internal university set-up'*, in which "the freedom vis-à-vis the state has to be complemented by certain internal structures and safeguards to make the system work. An autonomous university needs strong leadership, well endowed with budgetary and organisational competences, and it needs overall policies for recruitment and co-operation with industry. Further it should have an up-to-date administration in terms of accounting, human resources, technology transfer, etc. It needs to be an organisation, not just a loose envelope around a large number of academics who are entirely free to choose their paths". They are quick to moderate this advice by stating that "this does not contradict the necessity of core individual academic freedom regarding what to teach and which scientific field to pursue. It is also important that the specific nature of universities – which by necessity implies features of decentralisation and bottom-up modes of operation – is duly taken into account in any significant reform project".

It is important to keep these external discursive pressures in perspective, as oftentimes recommendations are not fully cognisant of the Slovenian context. For example, many of these external reports make generalised comments about the entire South-Eastern Europe or Western Balkan region, losing a great deal of idiosyncrasy. Comparatively, Slovenia is further progressed in terms of integration than other countries in the region. Moreover, concepts often get lost in translation, or interpreted and adapted in ways divergent from their original meaning (Zgaga, 2013b).

Naturally, researchers and practitioners in the region have voiced valid scepticism to such pressures. Yet there seems to be little by way of substitution for such 'outside' views, as the research infrastructure for HE studies in the region is still in its infancy or lacking a critical mass (Zgaga, 2013a). As Zgaga (2013a, p. 9) warns:

Specialized - and impartial - research on HE in the region was lacking throughout the past two decades. In the absence of original research the 'expert colonialism' has often appeared... However, without a deeper insight into historical, cultural, academic, etc., contexts of the region, any attempt to analyse the real dynamics of regional HE is sentenced to a 'colonial' transfer of ready-made solutions from the 'developed world'. It is not possible to copy and paste generalized recommendations in any context; if you live in a specific context and if you are confronted with its many problems, then you can understand it only as a cynical practice.

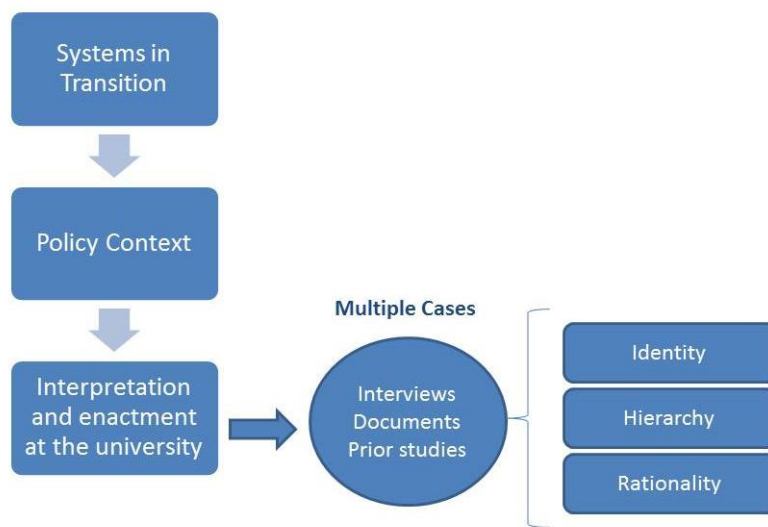
## 4. Interpretation and Enactment (Empirical Investigation)

The following section presents the empirical component of this thesis, which aims to determine how university actors in Slovenia have interpreted and enacted policies of integration. Indeed, as Bleiklie & Kogan (2007, p. 480) remark, “one cannot necessarily deduce actual practices in specific instances from general trends or ideals in policy documents”.

### 4.1. Research Design

It is first necessary to outline methodological considerations. Straightforwardly, *figure 1* represents the research design, incorporating the previous sections’ investigation into the systemic and policy contexts.

**Figure 1: Research Design**



For the empirical investigation, an embedded case study methodology seemed most appropriate given it is difficult to separate variables (Cai, 2013). Also, given the limited timeframe for the production of this thesis, it was imperative to define a bounded system, in which multiple sources of rich information could be accessed. Therefore, two cases were chosen for study, - the University of Ljubljana (UL) and the University of Maribor (UM) - the intention being that *multiple* cases would provide a broader and nationally-diverse picture.

This kind of research design also allows for flexibility in terms of data collection and analysis, integrating an array of data from different sources (Yin, 2011). Within the context of this thesis, this means a diverse sample of documents and interviewees from various units from the three institutions. Although the basic unit of research is the organisation, evidence that derives partly from subunits within the university helps to focus on different salient aspects of how universities do policy (Scholz & Tietje, 2002). This is particularly important so as to incorporate a range of perspectives for a more nuanced and balanced analysis.

Within these cases, a conceptual framework has been employed to frame the collection of data.

#### 4.1.1. Conceptual Framework

The multitude of variables related to university integration that have been identified thus far still need to be operationalised for the pragmatic execution of research and the collection of data (Dooley, 1984). A conceptual framework will therefore be employed to focus the empirical investigations, creating some boundaries within the vast amount of possible data sets and raising salient questions (Creswell, 2003).

An existing framework by de Boer et al. (2007) provides a useful basis on which to structure the research (*Appendix three*). The authors focus on the (re)construction of *identity*, *hierarchy* and *rationality* (Brunsson & Sahlin-Andersson, 2000) to systematically analyse the various aspects related to the transformation of the university towards a corporate actor. The framework provides constructs, dimensions and detailed indicators.

However, the inapplicability of generalised, Western-theorised concepts to a foreign context has already been discussed in section 3. Accordingly, a number of the specific dimensions and indicators were not appropriate, and were thus slightly re-conceptualised. A modified version (*Appendix four*) was therefore utilised to guide the empirical investigation.

To summarise, organisational *identity* refers to “the symbolic and cognitive side of organizations and their role in stimulating new ideas, changing attitudes, and new frames for action. In this context, organizational identity should be understood as a socially constructed concept of what the organization is or would like to be” (de Boer et al., 2007, p. 33). This means that faculty, staff and students are “embedded in a dynamic network of personal identity, values and understandings that are constantly developing in the light of internal and external interaction, pressure and constraint” (Croll, 1996, p. 156). A subtle point here is that identity both perpetuates and constrains current paradigms, but also compels change to take place. The previous section described identity as multi-dimensional, involving academic and organisational ‘tribal’ and ‘territorial’ affiliations, evolutionary drivers, functionalist agenda setting, open system relations, modes of knowledge production, profiling, etc.

The integrated university is also concerned with power relations and internal structuring principals aimed at co-ordinating actions towards specific ends; i.e. *hierarchy*. De Boer et al. (2007, p. 33) define the construct in a rather functionalist way: “to stimulate and enhance cooperation that is guided by organizational policies and authoritative leadership and management as a means of co-ordination of a collective entity that is engaged in a common project and aiming at shared priorities”. Thus, hierarchy captures notions of autonomy and academic freedom, accountability, authority, decision-making, rules and regulations, leadership, and managerialism. Moreover, hierarchy also captures subtler socio-cultural relationships such as the accumulation and exercise of power, prestige and achievement.

The third construct is *rationality*. “This label is associated with a rational goal model of organizational effectiveness. This perspective, which originated with Weber et al., stresses organizations as most appropriately directed towards attaining specific goals through formal and rational means. Organizations are thus expected to be ‘intentional’, to forecast goals, objectives and preferences, action alternatives and their consequences, to allocate responsibility, and to measure results and performances” (de Boer et al., 2007, p. 34). It is important to note that Weber, in his work detailing the development of rational forms, “did not advocate for the trajectory of rationalization. In fact, he foresaw a rigidifying of rationality’s iron cage, and ultimately disenchantment” (Gumport, 2012, p. 24).

In concrete terms, rationality refers to: firstly, leadership, strategic planning, information and analysis, human resource management, and business analytics – aimed at rationalizing

organizational behaviour and increasing efficiency (de Boer et al., 2007); and secondly its opposite, whereby a premise of limited rationality, conflicting interests, persistent ambiguity, and struggles for legitimacy allow for an understanding of how collegial, political and cultural dynamics interact with rationalist approaches to university organisation (Gumport, 2012).

All three of these constructs are translated into a context of practice (Ball et al., 2012). These translations occur through a series of 'mediations', which manifest in functionalist ways, but also as “creative reinterpretation by the actors involved at each successive stage of the process of” enacting change (Osborn et al., 2000, p. 234). In turn, these mediations set the circumstances and possibilities for policy enactment (Grimaldi, 2012). The research component of this thesis, therefore, seeks to uncover these manifest mediations according to each of the three constructs.

Finally, it is important to note that reforms in the public sector that seek more complete, integrated organisations tend to include combinations of these elements, and it is rare to find any organisational reform that seeks to reconstruct all of the dimensions described in this conceptual framework (Brunsson & Sahlin-Andersson, 2000).

#### **4.1.2. Data Collection**

The following three sources were utilised for the collection of data:

- Documentation
- Semi-structured interviews
- Data from other research

This data was then triangulated, integrated and used to address the research questions.

As mentioned, the conceptual framework guided the collection of data. The key concepts and some sample questions are contained within the framework in *Appendix four*.

To supplement the analysis, the author also draws upon direct, personal observations and media sources.

In order to ensure the validity, reliability and usability of the data, appropriate considerations were given to how data was collected and handled. Prior to embarking, an overview of the case study project, conceptual considerations, field procedures and sample questions were determined. Additionally, evidence was systematically and confidentially stored.

Where possible, English-language documents were sought and interviews were conducted in English. No serious limitations were encountered in this regard as most official documents from all sources could be found in English, and proficiency in English among Slovenians is high. However, in the rare cases where documents were not unavailable in English, or interviewees could not adequately translate elements of their responses, the author's knowledge of Slovene (and google translate) was sufficient to overcome this barrier.

Ethical considerations were also taken into account. All interviewees were provided with an overview of the research topic, its context within the MaRIHE programme, and were informed about the length and the concepts to be discussed in the interviews in advance. Furthermore, interviewees were also informed that participation is voluntary, comments would not be attributed directly to individuals, anonymity would be upheld, withdrawal from the research is possible at any stage, and that personal information would be held with utmost confidentiality. In all cases, permission was sought and granted in light of these considerations. In most cases,

permission was recorded in audio format, whilst all interviewees granted permission verbally and via email.

### *Documentation and Previous Research*

The study includes content analysis of a rich collection of documents produced by the case institutions, public bodies and third parties. In total, 29 documents were analysed. The documents used for this research can be found within the bibliography. Examples include university visions and missions, strategic plans, internal and external evaluations, university statutes, work programmes, organisational charts, policy statements, project reports, presentations, web content, etc.

The research also draws upon data from other studies, most heavily on a regional study conducted by the Centre for Educational Policy Studies at UL (Zgaga et al., 2013).

### *Structured Interviews*

The interview data consists of thirteen interviews. The interviews, which took approximately one hour, were semi-structured. This means that the conceptual framework formed the basic structure of the interview but specific questions and content were not pre-determined. Instead, the author attempted to reflexively guide the interviews based on the knowledge and characteristics of the interviewee. Thus, most questions were open-ended. They aimed to explore interviewees' perceptions of and reactions to university integration (and policies thereof), as well as to collect concrete examples of material practices; i.e. interpretations and enactments.

Moreover, many questions were formulated in a way that the specific statements made by the respondents were not the primary target. Rather, the statements were an index of something else that was unseen in the interview, which was the real purpose of the research. Concretely, the author was also interested to gather verbal reports of behaviour, meanings, attitudes and feelings that could not be gleaned from documentary evidence.

In order to go deeper than the level of mere rhetoric, the author attempted to ensure that interviews were not too formal and that personal rapport was high.

All interviews were recorded and almost completely transcribed.

### **4.1.3. Sample**

Through careful, structured sampling design, the study aims to provide data which is balanced, reliable and valid. The author therefore took steps to ensure that the sample represents a broad cross-section of institutions, interviewees, roles, and perspectives.

#### *Institutions*

The cases were chosen to represent different sizes and types of institutions. As mentioned, the two institutional cases were UL and UM. The sample aligns with the aforementioned regional study by Zgaga et al. (2013), in that it includes two public, multidisciplinary universities: the oldest, biggest, capital-city, 'flagship' university (UL) as well as a 'newer', smaller one in Slovenia's second largest city (UM).

A case study in the context of Slovenia has the potential to represent a large portion of the target population and public expenditure on HE, as the system is rather small and concentrated. There are only three public universities, a public independent institution, two private universities and 29 independent institutions (MoHEST, 2011). Furthermore, public institutions boast 86% of the

more than 90,000 HE students in Slovenia (Zgaga et al., 2013; (RS, 2014). Of this majority, over half of them are at UL.

Taking into consideration these statistics, not to mention the fact that this thesis is focused on public policy trajectories, the focus of the case studies is on public universities. Given the UL's size and status as the 'national' university, there is a clear incentive to include this university in this case study.

However, UL's size does not mean that it is representative of how universities do policy in Slovenia. As Clark (1989) noted, older, larger and more traditional universities are less likely to respond to their (policy) environment than newer, smaller institutions. Thus, it was imperative to include other cases in the research. UM represents a smaller, newer public university, and was thus included.

Descriptions of the institutions can be found in *Appendix five*.

### *Interviewees*

Thirteen interviews were conducted, the sample structured to include a cross-section of roles, experience and perspectives. Of the thirteen interviewees, two vice-rectors, one academic director, three deans, two vice-deans, one department head, one student councillor, one assistant secretary general, one faculty head of quality assurance and learning, and one assistant professor are included. Moreover, a number of interviewees have experience in other senior leadership roles in universities - including former vice-rectors, deans and secretary generals - as well as in the broader HE system - including state secretary, senior leadership roles in the Slovenian Quality Assurance Agency (SQAA), Slovenian representatives to the EU and the OECD, and other public sector positions. The interviewees remain anonymous.

In order to ensure a cross-section, consideration was given to distinctions between academic groups within the university. Two major categories were identified. The first is the vertical distinction between the level of seniority and responsibility of academic staff (Teichler, 2012) and the second is a horizontal distinction between disciplines and types of knowledge production (Leisyte et al., 2009; Gibbons et al., 1994).

In terms of the vertical distinction, the case studies encompass two broad levels of academic staff, namely professors and senior academics (professors and associate professors or equivalent), and junior academic staff (assistant professors and lecturers or equivalent) (Teichler, 2012). Additionally, the vertical dimension also includes individuals with different levels of responsibility, i.e. those in managerial/leadership positions, like vice-rectors, deans and vice-deans, to those with no (or limited) managerial responsibilities.

In terms of the horizontal distinction, the author splits the population "according to the dichotomy of mono-disciplinary versus multi-disciplinary research as well as humanities versus sciences to account for the disciplinary differences" (Leisyte et al., 2009). This means that appropriate coverage can be given to the "teaching-research nexus for different types of knowledge production (Gibbons et al. 1994)" and to "'hard' versus 'soft' fields of research" (Leisyte et al., 2009). Accordingly, the disciplinary fields included in the sample encompass marketing, computer sciences, bio-technology, agriculture, social pedagogy, accounting, economics, public policy, education, geography, mathematics and physics.

Moreover, one member of the student council and two administrative/professional staff members were also interviewed. These three individuals possess rich experience working across their institutions as well as specific, technical expertise related to their professional duties.



While the focus of interviews was primarily at an institutional level - the interviewees representing their universities - the interviewees also responded as members of their various tribes and territories and as individuals.

## **4.2. Results & Discussion**

### **4.2.1. A Brief Note on Data Analysis**

Creating order from chaos (i.e. the data) was not an easy task. The interpretation and enactment of policy occur within what is a holistic and complex system, and it is difficult to separate and categorise data without neglecting nuance and context. Indeed, as Ball et al. (2013, p. 8) mention, “few policies arrive fully formed and the processes of policy [interpretation and] enactment also involve ad-hockery, borrowing, re-ordering, displacing, making do and re-invention”. Thus, clearly defined and consistent themes are artificial, as activities are neither uniform nor static.

Nevertheless, the author employs a mixture of structured and unstructured approaches to data analysis in an attempt to form a cohesive and comprehensive presentation. Firstly, two broad categories were formed according to the policy trajectory, namely, *interpretation* and *enactment*. However, these two phases are strongly interconnected, with many points overlapping.

Within these two broad sections, a general inductive approach was utilised in order to “allow research findings to emerge from the frequent, dominant, or significant themes inherent in raw data, without the restraints imposed by structured methodologies” (Thomas, 2006, p. 238). For more details of this approach, please see *Appendix six*.

In short, the general inductive approach provides a simple and systematic set of procedures for analysing qualitative data that can produce reliable and valid findings. This allowed the author to analyse and condense the raw data into summative format, and to structure it in a framework with clear linkages and logics aligned with the research objectives (Thomas, 2006).

Ironically, after a number of iterations, the three constructs from the conceptual framework proved a useful lens for which to group the emerged themes related to policy enactments.

Furthermore, the separation of these results from the analytical discussion seemed artificial. Separation would create an unnecessary disjuncture between the observation and interpretation of data. The author believes that this would inhibit the readers’ understanding of how universities do policy in Slovenia. Therefore, the discussion is included alongside the results.

### **4.2.2. Interpretation**

#### **4.2.2.1. Definitions and Approaches**

According to the content analysis, there were different ways in which university integration was interpreted, both between and within universities. The author conceives these differences in terms of interrelated dichotomies. Specifically, the following distinctions were identified: *structural/functional*, *designed/emergent*, and *top-down/bottom-up*. Furthermore, these three sets of dichotomies are not mutually exclusive, as elements of one dichotomy imply elements of another.

The first dichotomy, *structural/functional*, relates to how university integration was defined, in which a distinction was made between integration as a structural, centralised process as opposed to a process in which selected, isolated functions were linked for the sake of expediency.

Content analysis of strategic documents provides a good example of the first dichotomy. Both universities have explicit strategies displayed prominently on their websites outlining their values, visions, missions and objectives. However, these two strategies read quite differently. UL's tends towards a functional definition. It is less prescriptive, broader, and more analytic, outlining its current position, its strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and challenges, priorities and necessary pre-conditions. However, concrete plans are absent and, furthermore, the rectorate appears not to have a prominent role in preparing them; the prime responsibility being at the level of the university member (UL, 2014). This implies that integration happens *between* university members, facilitated by the rectorate, rather than within a centralised structure. In practice, this means that selected, isolated functions are the focus of integration across the institution. Quality is a good example, evidenced by the Quality of UL (KUL) project; an inter-faculty initiative aimed at developing a quality culture across the university through a combination of actions (Turk, 2014). However, the faculties participate as independent entities, working together on a project basis rather than within a central unit as part of a holistic development plan.

On the other hand, while UM's strategic documentation includes a similar kind of SWOT analysis, there is far more emphasis placed on structural/organisational aspects of the strategy. The *Development Strategy of the University of Maribor, 2013-2020* (UM, 2013) seeks, for example, institutional and programme interoperability, efficient-decision making systems, and to combine knowledge and assets. Notably, it also seeks to establish a strategically aligned, institutional quality assurance system, operated through the Quality Development Centre (QDC). The university has also established a limited liability company, RAZ:UM, which aims to foster external integration. Such structural mechanisms towards university integration imply a more centralised, and structurally integrated interpretation.

Both of these definitions were evident in interviews and, contrary to the documentary evidence, could be found within each of the universities. There was no correlation between whether the interviewee was in a university-wide leadership role or in a faculty-level role and whether their interpretation favoured a structural or functional approach to integration. For example, a vice-dean at UL favoured a structural definition, thus:

We have here a conflict. Such a decentralised system is quite interesting for academic people...but we forgot that some things should be centralised and managed better. We need to be focused on decisions and actions, and not on the money, human resource things, etc. (Interview 6; 7/4/2014)

While a vice-dean from UM expressed a functionalist definition as follows:

These formal structures are not important at all. Who is the dean, is it a department or faculty, etc. At the moment, our university is too focused on that and not enough on the processes... We don't have groups together, and we don't think about how to get better in the system... I think it's a good point to have this integration of functions where you stimulate this cooperation and to obtain the best emerging properties from the whole system (Interview 1; 26/3/2014).

Overall, there was considerable opposition to a centralised, structural definition of university integration. However, the sample size limits generalisation at both universities. Specifically, six interviewees expressed the opinion that a structural approach to integration failed to capture the reality of faculty work and lacked a tangible, practical benefit. It was viewed as resulting in burdensome 'red tape' rather than as a shared service. For example:

Some rectors are persuaded that the university will become excellent only if the formal structures will be restructured in a centralised way. This is not the case...UM does not

have a centralised campus. We have separate buildings. The faculties are financed separately... I am not persuaded that declared centralisation in the documents will have any [positive] outcome...Can you imagine if 2500 students went to a student affairs office in Slomškov trg [head office]? This is a question of what makes sense to centralise (Interview 11; 25/3/2014).

University-wide projects are not visible on the ground; nothing. You cannot imagine that I was once, in 28 years, in the headquarters of the university for only one meeting. And I was shocked. The administration talked to me like a stranger. Not like they are service provider. They came with the rules, which were quite problematic. Not as assistance but as additional administration, as additional power (Interview 6; 7/4/2014).

One may infer from such comments that some interviewees have rather narrow, pre-conceived notions of integration. For example, a distinction was not made between reorganising reporting lines along functional lines (so that, for example, the head of a faculty-level quality office would report to a central quality authority rather than to the dean) and reorganising the physical infrastructure of the university. Similarly, centralisation of institutional policy-making was often confused with the centralisation of facilities, decision-making and resources. This led a number of interviewees to conclude that the professoriate would not be able to exercise their judgement and discretion in a structurally integrated system.

To be fair, this distinction between structural and functional integration was not always presented as binary, rather the definitions were also described as following a temporal sequence. Of those interviewees that expressed this idea, only one person thought that structure should precede functional integration. The majority of interviewees expressed the contrary belief. For example:

...some rectors are persuaded that the university will become excellent only if the formal structures will be restructured in a certain way. This is not the case, as the outcomes come out of the processes (Interview 11; 25/3/2014).

I think about any system and how it functions, and the organisation follows. I am not really sure you can change the processes if you start with changing the structure of the organisation. I always think you have to change the processes, the dynamics of the system. For example, I am not sure if you make 10 or 11 faculties from 17 faculties that you've solved the problem. You will not increase cooperation with industry just through reorganisation. In the Bologna process, we didn't succeed to change the process of teaching or research just by changing the organisation. Of course you have to match structures...if we will join everything together, and have a lot of common projects, and we meet each other regularly, then it would make sense that to have a common faculty. If you first establish a structure, then you give people the impression they're not invited. If you first establish a common interest, then you get the desired structure (Interview 1; 26/3/2014).

However, in practice even functional aspects that are being integrated have not resulted in a subsequent structural re-design. For example, although UL is working on a large, university-wide quality project (the KUL project), reporting lines for the quality function are still faculty based, and not functionally based. While this may allow for faculty-specific issues to be addressed, it results in a fragmentation of standards, a disparity in quality between faculties (which impinges on their ability to cooperate), and a lack of professionalization of the quality function.

From this definition of university integration, a second dichotomy ensues relating to whether a *designed* or an *emergent* approach is taken. Logically, there is a connection between a structural definition of university integration and a designed approach. A design-led approach combines design thinking - a methodology that imbues planning activities with a human-centred design

ethos (Brown, 2008) – with business strategy (NZTE, 2014). The idea is that ‘designers’ (i.e. central planners) conceive and implement an integrated design (or strategy), which meets the needs of the organisation and customer (Brown, 2008). This approach can also be thought of as a *deliberate* strategy; something that is realised as intended (Mintzberg & Waters, 1985).

This approach to university integration was primarily evident at UM. It has designed a number of strategies - for example, for development, research, internationalisation and European integration - motivated by a new team at the rectorate and a number of external evaluations in recent years. All of these appear to form a holistic, integrated and designed package of strategies. Aligned with these documents, concrete actions have resulted, such as a quality assurance system, IT system, innovation platforms, shared infrastructure, and two multidisciplinary consortia. This kind of designed approach is also confirmed by a senior leader who said:

This year, we managed to achieve a huge victory because we managed to design and confirm the strategy of the university...not of the faculties. We also approved an action plan. These are completely new documents for Slovenian universities. Before, of course, we had a formal plan for development. But what does this mean? It meant a small group of people prepared some pages of excellent text, which was never discussed and never implemented (Interview 7; 2/4/2014).

UL too displays some elements of this approach. For example, it also has strategic documents, a university innovation centre, quality initiatives, etc. But they tend to be less aligned with one another, and appear more as a loosely-coupled collection of initiatives, with only a semblance of design-inspired coordination from the rectorate. This may be due to the size and nature of the university

However, since an external evaluation by EUA in 2006/7, a more coherent package of reforms has manifested, aligned with the recommendations of the final report (EUA, 2007). This includes an integrated ICT system, and, notably, the KUL project; a large, well-designed project involving all faculties (except one). It comprises a significant amount of actions related to the development quality related mechanisms, such as surveys, joint programmes, a tutorial system, analyses and reviews, and a series of external evaluations and accreditations (Turk, 2014; Interviews). This is indicative of a more design-led approach to university integration, although clearly limited to the realm of quality.

Ironically, many examples of design thinking from both universities lack specificity. This allows divergent interpretations and enactments at the faculty level. The following excerpt from a recent EUA evaluation (EUA, 2013, p. 7) highlights this point:

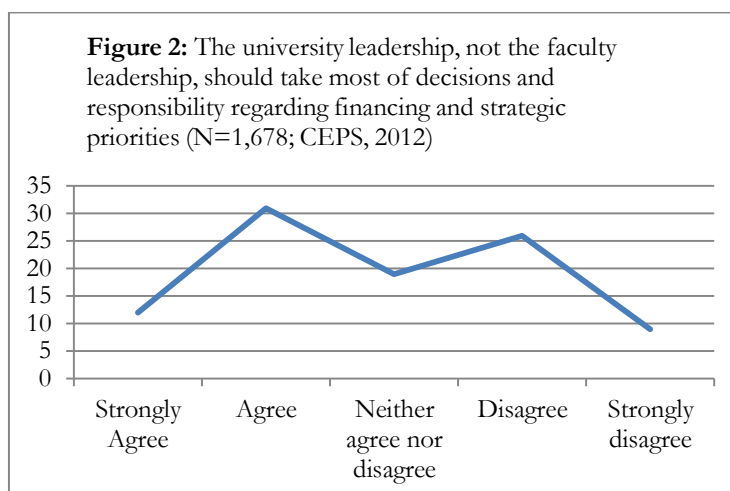
However, the mission statement leads to various understandings when it comes to faculty. The SER actually specifies that ‘UM has a broad-based vision and mission enabling faculties and other university members to specify their own visions and goals within the framework of UM’s mission’. The university allows faculties and other entities (library and dormitories) to define their own vision and goals as long as they comply with the overarching mission statement, which itself remains vague... The excessively broad mission statement deprives UM of a university-wide identity and hinders the implementation of an overarching strategy.

And like all design-led approaches, it is inevitable that some individuals will not buy into the product. Accordingly, five interviewees expressed some scepticism towards such an approach. It was described as primarily declarative, with little impetus for real change. Those in faculty-level roles particularly expressed scepticism about the ability of the rectorate to coordinate members’ actions. They saw designed initiatives as burdensome, lacking benefits and displaying a poor understanding of local idiosyncrasies. For example, one vice-dean commented:

This is only money distribution. OK, I am too cynical. Of course such things are moving slowly. We are developing quality management stuff, reporting, monitoring stuff, etc. but the quality of these documents, the impact of these things is quite reduced. So maybe in 10 years [there will be an impact] because our system is quite reluctant to any change, to any reforms, to any things that change individual behaviour and competences (Interview 6; 7/4/2014).

On the other hand, a functional integration implies an *emergent* approach, whereby patterns or consistencies are realised despite, or in the absence of, intentions (Mintzberg & Waters, 1985). Accordingly, as functions within the university are identified as showing potential for integration, or when the external environment necessitates change, plans and initiatives emerge, disconnected from a centralised, planned design. Indeed, universities have traditionally operated in this way, with low potency for collective action (Clark, 1983). Previous examples of this approach typically relate to functional integration at UL. An additional example is interdisciplinary degree programmes, such as the Sport Management Graduate Programme at UL. It is a collaborative programme of the Faculty of Economics and the Faculty of Sport. Such programmes are a result of isolated, bilateral faculty interaction, and thus can be classed as emergent relative to the whole university.

Finally, the third dichotomy, *top-down/bottom-up*, accounts for where in the organisation attempts to integrate the university originate. Indeed, a designer, a central authority or a structural unit imply a select group of individuals (i.e. the ‘top’), who attempt to initiate change. Contrary to the aforementioned scepticism towards structural and designed approaches to integration, there is evidence to suggest that strong central leadership may be favoured by the Slovenian academic community. This is demonstrated in *figure 2*, below (adapted from Zgaga et al., 2013, p. 41):



Such sentiments were also expressed by interviewees, both in faculty-level positions and university-wide roles. At least five interviewees expressed the sentiment that vesting more trust and responsibility in the senior leadership of the university would benefit the system as a whole. This was summed up by a senior member of UL’s rectorate thus:

Most of the initiatives that we have at this university are bottom-up. And when they are bottom-up, it is very clear where the interest comes from. But the rectorate has to see the university as a whole. So an initiative has to be considered for the benefit of all the university and, therefore, for all of the members. And some of the procedures that we have in order to process such initiatives [are intended to] give it a proper and meaningful place in this situation...I fear that the members that would like to come and get such initiatives into force, they just see procedures.

But the question arises, what is actually meant by a *bottom-up* approach? Is it simply collective strategizing and decision making, as the democratic governance structures of both universities suggests?; or does it rather entail the rectorate taking an active role in presenting and facilitating integration initiatives of which university members contribute to the content, take ownership and enact? This is a subtle yet important distinction. While those in favour of a more centralised, designed approach to university integration were, not surprisingly, those in senior leadership positions at the rectorate, this did not mean an ‘autocratic’ approach. Rather, senior leaders at both universities demonstrated an awareness of the democratic nature of the university and thus sought ways to engage university members. Some exemplary comments include:

All the time we worked with the members of the university; students, academics, staff...I invited deans and professors with a high degree of authority and asked them to prepare with us the professional reports for each area for the self-evaluation report...Maybe this was one of the main stones that we changed in the university. That they start to work with us, that we see a common future, we see that the university means something in the integration process. Of course, we have a mission, vision, everything. But now they understand what the university mission means. They see now that we must have a common vision for our future development (Interview 7; 2/4/2014).

I would say that integration comes and stems from trust. What is trust based on? It lays on recognition and knowing each other; that opportunities are given that the members, the people, mingle, talk to each other, communicate. These platforms we have to provide for them so that they can join forces where they see opportunities. And I think this is lacking really, because...we are very distributed so we don't meet very often. And when people are asked to come to the rectorate, they would see it as yet another meeting. Gradually, during these 6 years, we have been building peer groups. And in these peer groups, people actually are communicating...And it's a very fruitful cooperation because people can contribute what they do and combine it with what other people do. And I think that's the role of the rectorate (Interview 13; 4/4/2014).

To conclude this section, the author notes that there appears to be a disconnect between what is declared at the university level and the subjective interpretations of university integration by individuals. But this is life, plurality, democracy and the result of free will. Indeed, it is probably not possible to totally reconcile these dichotomies. As one interviewee put it: “whose responsibility is it to develop shared identity? I would say the top. The top would say ‘bottom-up’” (Interview 6; 7/4/2014).

#### **4.2.2.2. External Influences – Opportunities & Constraints**

Such definitions and approaches to university integration do not happen in a vacuum. External influences impact the way in which universities do policy. According to the content analysis, several prominent themes emerged related to external influences, namely, accreditation, internationalisation, rankings, the financial crisis, and the legislative and systemic environment. These provide both opportunities and constraints for university integration.

Firstly, external accreditations and evaluations emerged as an external variable of significant influence. Both universities have undergone institutional evaluations from EUA in recent years (UL in 2006/7 and UM in 2013). Additionally, with the establishment of SQAA in 2010, a process of national institutional and programmatic accreditations was initiated. Consequently, both institutions have been required to define their strategic aims, plans, systems and processes in a myriad of documents, resulting in explicit, well-publicised strategies, organisational schemes, manuals, policies, and procedures, which seek to connect and develop the university. Indeed, UM explicitly took the external procedures as an opportunity to develop a comprehensive package of reforms, as explained by one interviewee:

A huge help was the methodology of the accreditation process. The first rule is that institutions must have their own vision mission and strategic programme...We started in 2012 with the self-evaluation process. We invited external evaluators from EUA. They gave us their recommendations. We used their recommendations as a platform for our programme. In the same year, we also had the national institutional accreditation process. We took this as an opportunity to prepare the system; to define the processes and the relationship between the rectorate and the members (Interview 7; 2/4/2014).

Similarly, many of the current initiatives at UL are indicative of the recommendations from the final EUA report. The report (EUA, 2007) recommended the development of university-wide, interdisciplinary programmes, standardised student evaluation procedures, improved quality management systems, increased communication between the members, an integrated enterprise system, and cooperative research programmes, all of which are now under development or in force. However, some recommendations, such as a comprehensive accounting system, are yet to be realised.

Another type of accreditation and evaluation relates to specific faculties or disciplines, for example the EQUIS or AACSB accreditations for business schools. The study found that some faculties pursue such accreditation as a means to boost their quality and reputation; very important conditions for success in an increasingly competitive HE environment (Marginson, 2006). This can be seen to lead to stronger integration at disciplinary/faculty level. For example, the faculties of economics and business at both universities have undergone external, disciplinary accreditation. The impact on integration was purported to be significant:

If you ask to what extent [accreditation impacted integration]: extremely. How? We started to think about real issues; what are your obstacles, what you have to improve. We have done a lot in the quality loop. We have developed some mechanisms for controlling the quality of our teaching. We developed steering committees to monitor each particular programme. We discussed a lot of different types of exercises; exams, seminar, workshops, etc. how to include the students and so on. We discussed how to behave in classes, how to form groups, how to develop a multicultural environment, how to support our teaching process with new technological possibilities and so on. And the whole school was thinking about this. We involved a lot of people. And so we also increased commitment (Interview 2; 4/4/2014).

However, the paradox is that strongly integrated members may impede wider university integration for a number of reasons. Firstly, it is difficult for such faculties to redefine their objectives in line with university policies because they are obliged to fulfil certain standards set by external agencies. Secondly, strengthened integration has led to strengthened performance and connections with national and international partners. This naturally results in discrepancies between the size, resourcing, status, and influence of some faculties vis-à-vis others. Thus, the level of engagement in university initiatives by faculties differs.

One may therefore argue that policies of integration are interpreted to a certain degree through the lens of external actors. This means that much of the diagnosis of the challenges facing universities, and the strategic responses, are not primarily interpreted by university actors. Numerous questions arise from the increased influence of external agents, such as: are disciplinary elites being created? If so, how/should this be balanced? What is the role of such elites? Who determines quality? Are such criteria a help or a hindrance to university integration? The consequences of this, especially in terms of culture and change-readiness, deserve further attention beyond the scope of this thesis.

Secondly, internationalisation was also observed to have a significant influence on university integration at both universities. As Zgaga et al. (2013, p. 66) note, "At the institutional level,

*capacity-building* prevails as the main aim of internationalisation” in the countries of the Western Balkans. In practice, much of this capacity-building can be defined as university integration.

To realise this, Slovenian universities have benefited from European funding, particularly EU programmes such as Erasmus, TEMPUS, Framework Programmes, and others. Indeed, “In 2013, UL altogether cooperated in 421 EU projects” (UL, 2014). Many of these initiatives, such as the Centres of Excellence, involve participants from multiple faculties and disciplines; a kind of horizontal integration. Similarly, UM “has actively participated in the Erasmus programme since 1999. For this academic year UM has signed around 340 agreements with Erasmus partner universities” (UM, 2014). This too puts pressure on UM to develop internal mechanisms to facilitate the mobility of students.

Such activities align the university’s standards with international norms and promote cooperation and the strategic redevelopment of teaching, research and service activities; thus aiding university integration. Indeed, one interviewee remarked that involvement in European projects changes the cooperative behaviour of university actors, allowing individuals and faculties to communicate, share resources and work on common projects. However, he questioned the university’s ability to translate that into domestically-related activities: “Slovenia is the master of EU projects. Overnight, we can do this correctly, properly. But for us, for our own institution; no” (Interview 6; 7/4/2014).

Correspondingly, despite this high level of commitment to internationalisation, Zgaga et al. (2103, p. 62) note that “university practices and especially support services are not sufficiently adapted to serve this purpose. A strategic approach coordinated across faculties, schools and departments to enable the sharing of good practice and consistent quality in internationalisation practice is largely absent”.

Rather, “the single most important driver of international cooperation remains individual academics. It is through the bottom-up initiatives of academics that short-term mobility, research cooperation, development of joint study programmes, and other activities are developed” (Zgaga et al., 2013, p 62). This is congruent with the research of Krücken (2003; 2011), who looks at how integration between the university and its environments is achieved. He similarly affirms that “university-business relations remain highly personalized and informal. Because of issues of trust and tacit knowledge, informal transfer patterns have not been replaced by [organisational structures]” (Krücken, 2011, p. 7).

In the absence of an integrated internationalisation strategy, the extent to which internationalisation aids university integration is questionable. Furthermore, the relative strength and size of faculties again plays an important role, with strong faculties benefiting from such activities far more than smaller ones. The Faculty of Economics at UL, for example, hosts over half of all incoming international exchange students in Slovenia (Klemenčič & Flander, 2013; Faculty of Economics, 2013) However, the share of those participating in Erasmus from the entire student body, academic and professional staff remains low (Klemenčič & Flander, 2013). As one interviewee commented:

Internationalisation does a lot of good for universities. But internationalisation happens on two levels: on the faculty level and at the university level. Because the faculties have a very high level of autonomy in their activities, it does not always benefit everyone equally (Interview 13; 4/4/2014).

Thirdly, rankings were also identified as possibly influencing interpretations of university integration. Comments were made, such as, “rankings really contribute to integration” (Interview 13; 4/4/2014) and “We’ve started measuring our success in terms of these rankings only



recently. I don't think everyone has realised that this means a shift. . I mean, if you want to rank high in this or in that, you need to strengthen your potentials and achievements in certain areas" (Interview 7; 2/4/2014). However, the data was insufficient to draw any conclusions regarding rankings.

Fourthly, the financial crisis and the limited resources available to universities were repeatedly identified as influencing integration, both positively and negatively. Indeed, "The effect of the financial crisis on education budgets is mainly seen in the countries that had substantial general budget deficits in 2010 and 2011" (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2013), of which Slovenia is a classic case. Thus, substantial funding decreases have occurred (MoES, 2011). The financial cuts have manifested themselves in numerous ways. Slovenia has borne salary cuts, restrictions to student meals, student aid, and a decrease in the overall budget (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2013). The Slovenian government adds that cuts have been primarily directed at funds dedicated for investments (MoES, 2011).

Not only has the bleak financial environment hindered universities' ability to invest in programmes that seek to increase integration, but it has also diverted people's attention from this topic, as issues of survival and security take precedence. Some examples from interviews include:

We really don't have money, even for salaries. We really just think how to survive. Therefore people don't think very much about [integration]. But if we want to improve the situation, we need to think about that (Interview 1; 26/3/2014).

Financial sources are the problem. We have some limits. And of course, the workload is high. Now people are nervous because the overall situation is worse than it was. The crisis is still not over. People are nervous, they are tired of everything. And sometimes we cannot pay for these activities [for integration]. And so you have to stimulate people to do it (Interview 8; 26/3/2014).

Contrastingly, content analysis suggests that budget cutbacks have also helped to stimulate cooperation. As the EUA evaluation report (EUA, 2013, p. 10) noted, "The crisis and the subsequent dwindling funds have actually fostered discussions between the university leaders and the deans, who are striving to preserve the existence and development of the university and its faculties". Thus we see a kind of forced cooperation and pooling of resources. This was also confirmed in interviews:

I think every member of the university has realised, especially during this crisis, how important it is to manage resources well, in the broadest sense...How to deal with them in the best way? How to provide the best services? These questions are very much upfront to all of us (Interview 3; 23/4/2014).

We are living in a certain environment which is considered to be critical. The tension is to integrate more, and to find internal resources...the crisis prompts closer integration. The faculties are actually asking the rectorate to perform certain functions for them; to transfer part of their activity. This doesn't mean a strengthened rectorate in terms of numbers. But in a way it actually means they are trying to align themselves. You have a similar focus...on one single point at the rectorate. (Interview 13; 4/4/2014)

So in terms of the difficult funding environment, one witnesses another dichotomy; between encouraging cooperation and a tendency towards short-sighted survival.

Finally, the legislative and systemic environment has also influenced the way in which integration has been interpreted. All interviewees viewed the national system as a constraint rather than an enabler. As the EUA report (2007, p. 6) observes: "University governance faces another major constraint, which is an external one. Political and institutional authorities seem to be

extraordinarily strongly involved in the organisation and the funding of the Slovenian universities. There are laws and rules that constrain the recruitment and the careers of the teachers as well as enrolment of the students”. Other constraints relate to language and quality assurance.

Indeed, the academic career structure in Slovenia strictly defines how universities manage their human resources. Specifically, the habilitation system and the chair structure prescribe a rigid set of conditions for career advancement. The habilitation process essentially sets out criteria for habilitation into academic positions. This is a tiresome, over-bureaucratized and long process (EUI, 2014; Interviews). On top of this, the availability of positions is limited by the chair structure, in which the Ministry determines and finances a limited number of positions at each level. “Effectively it can happen that scholars have the habilitation for a higher post but they continue to be stuck on a lower position (e.g. an Associate Professor working as an Assistant Professor) for long periods of time” (EUI, 2014).

Accordingly, universities are limited in their ability to promote, incentivise and determine the criteria for advancement of faculty. This runs counter to neo-liberal notions of competition, incentivisation, and meritocracy, which are inextricably linked with the notion of integration. Instead university academic career structures, as defined by the legislative environment, do not encourage academics to take on service roles within the institution. While academics with managerial positions are formally allowed to reduce their academic commitments, in reality they must maintain their teaching and research pipelines in order not to be disadvantaged once their management tenure is over. This is compounded by the fact that criteria for career progression almost exclusively relate to teaching and research activities, failing to value or reward those that serve their institutions in an administrative function. This means that leaders end up maintaining their academic outputs in addition to their managerial workloads. Additionally, the perception towards academics who take on leadership roles is not entirely positive. Viewed together, these factors limit the extent to which faculty engage in initiatives that serve to integrate the institution. The following comments describe this challenging environment:

According to the law, if you take position of dean, vice-dean, rector or vice-rector, the law allows us to cut our obligation at the faculty level a lot. 67% of working time is at the rectorate. But in reality, nobody gives up their subjects because after four years we must return to the faculty, and we need subjects, courses... So it is very difficult because we must work both roles. This is not fair....There is no reward system for leadership; zero. When I have my habilitation, they completely neglect my work in HE. They see me as just an academic...This is our destiny. Whenever you go in the field of [governance], in the university, at the national level, or international level, the academic community immediately puts you in one box: This person is a politician (Interview 7; 2/4/2014).

Old, recognised researchers can still be in the position of assistant, which can be quite a bit lower in terms of pay. This is not motivational at all. It only pushes young researchers to go abroad (Interview 8; 26/3/2014).

Moreover, this system makes it very difficult for foreigners to work in Slovenian universities. This presents a twofold problem; firstly, foreign expertise that could be conducive to organisational capacity-building is restricted, and secondly, it is difficult to fully internationalise, the merits of which have already been discussed.

Related to this is the issue of language. The official language of instruction is of course Slovene, but the language provision in the law complicates the implementation of educational activities in English (Miklavič, 2011). Miklavič (2011) explains: “In 2004, the prevailing opinion...was that protecting the Slovenian language at the academic level is more important than making Slovenian HE attractive to foreign students, teachers and researchers. Concern for language is one of the

functions of HE, which is ascribed relatively great importance in the Slovenian political space but is in conflict with the speedy opening of educational policy and the establishment of market imperatives". This restricts internationalisation and opportunities for the future integration of international study programmes. This opinion was affirmed by almost all interviewees, for example:

We need to lose some constraints in the law, like using the language. We cannot release this completely but we can bring in some exemptions, for example courses for Erasmus students. Otherwise, we cannot internationalise (Interview 3; 23/4/2014).

Finally, the frequency of the funding cycle poses another systemic constraint. Under the current model, the amount of funding for universities is determined on an annual basis. Universities fear that such a frequent funding cycle reduces their ability to effectively implement long-term strategies (UM, 2013e). Thus, the strategic plan can get blurred with the annual work plan; their goals converge and big-picture vision is lost. As one interviewee remarked:

It's like the strategic goals are somewhat far away. And every year we have to define the goals and priorities for the next year. Because that's the system in our country; it's an annual programme. We don't like to see five meters further. But our strategy is until 2020! (Interview 13; 4/4/2014).

#### **4.2.2.3. Internal Influences – Opportunities & Constraints**

Internal factors also influence how universities do policies of integration. In this regard, several prominent themes emerged from the data analysis; namely, internal dynamics such as solutionism, size, equity, power, politics, reflexive positionality, and self-interest, as well as the historical legacy.

The first point relates to how university integration has been defined, i.e. along structural or functional lines. We have seen that the inference from a structural definition is that it can be superficial, a kind of declarative 'technical solutionism', rather than a substantive solution to a fragmented university. Indeed, technical solutionism, adapted from Morozov (2013), relates to the observation that there is a tendency among university leaders to attempt simply to fix everything through neo-liberal prescriptions; strategizing, quantifying, tracking, reporting and monitoring. Indeed, 'managerial' technology (e.g. quality assurance, ICT, and performance management systems) can be a force for improvement and capacity-building, "but only if we keep solutionism in check" (Morozov, 2013) and learn to appreciate the imperfections of an autonomous and democratic academy. In fact, some of these 'imperfections' (e.g. tenure, liberal education, democratic decision-making) are not accidental but by design; in order to serve the public good and ensure impartial, critical thought (Hohm & Shore, 1998).

The examples of technical solutionism that have already been provided (i.e. new strategic documents, structures, performance indicators, etc.) influence the way in which university integration is perceived. While it can contribute positively to university integration, technical solutionism was also seen to lead to cynicism, alienation and aversion to 'solutions' in the absence of an obvious, practical benefit, as noted by six interviewees. Some exemplary comments include:

I am not persuaded that declared centralisation in the documents will have any outcome. For example, in the business world, two companies merge; signing the merging document is a piece of cake but consolidation take years as the processes need to be consolidated...In Slovenia, we are in the phase of declarative centralisation. And in all other countries, if they are doing centralisation, they are not talking about it as

centralisation, they are talking about collaboration that leads to integration within the university (Interview 11; 25/3/2014).

I noticed this managerial rhetoric. I feel [this is] a certain constraint because they are not really in tune with what would be meaningful. For example, they measure a lot of things; student graduation rates, professors... In a way it's meaningful that they give feedback. But this system is a little bit alienating. Sometimes only five students would give you feedback. The numbers therefore are not meaningful (Interview 4; 22/4/2014).

Thus, the author warns that striving for seamless efficiency, whereby everyone is forced to follow a regime based on neo-liberal technical solutionism, may result in an interpretation of such solutions that betrays their original intentions.

Secondly, the author poses the concept of 'reflexive positionality' as an internal influence. It relates to the anthropological concept of positionality (Alcoff, 1988), according to which "knowledge is valid when it includes an acknowledgement of the knower's specific position in any context, because changing contextual and relational factors are crucial for defining identities and our knowledge in any given situation" (Maher & Tetreault, 1993, p. 118). In the context of this thesis, reflexive positionality is therefore an ideal, which refers to an individual's affiliation with and awareness of their role as being part of, and contributing to, the holistic institutional environment.

The author observes a lack of reflexive positionality, which may hinder university integration, although the data does not allow for any generalised conclusions. Nonetheless, all interviewees either described or demonstrated the fact that their social identity - i.e. that part of their self-concept which derives from their knowledge of their membership of a social group (Tajfel, 1982, p. 2) - related to a limited field of activity usually confined to their immediate disciplinary group or the faculty; academic tribes and territories seemed to prevail. Exceptions were those in university-wide positions of responsibility, who exhibited a greater degree of reflexive positionality, as would be expected.

This lack of reflexive positionality was noted already in the EUA report of 2007, which remarked that there was a "lack of interfaculty relationships and formal horizontal coordination...[A] faculty dean explained that, according to him, the UL is so big that freedom is needed in the faculties. Moreover, he added, nobody is interested nor could be interested in what happens in the faculty he chairs" (EUA, 2007, p. 5). A vice-dean from UL summarized this internal dynamic thus:

We don't have a long tradition of being an independent state; we don't have a long tradition of an independent administration. We are somehow not grown up in a system where you have to take responsibility for your job and for the others'...We employ smart persons. But they are not willing to understand that they are somewhere in the system; that they provide a service; that they have to work in the system and for others (Interview 6; 7/4/2014).

Individuals' knowledge of how the system functions is also impeded by this lack of reflexive positionality. A number of interviewees, particularly those in more junior positions, lacked an awareness of institutional systems and processes. Respondents from the bigger university, UL, also tended to lack a broader systems perspective than those from UM. The following quotes describe this challenge:

I only know about the changes that are publicly discussed or those which affect my work (Interview 4; 22/4/2014).

I don't know about this work programme. I don't remember if I was invited (Interview 9; 10/4/2014).

Sometimes, people do not know the situation quite well, and they do not know the broader picture and they want to find a solution on the basis of what they know or what the situation may be in some [other] faculties (Interview 2; 4/4/2014).

I feel how this responsibility is really divided, and how nobody knows the answer. And I know that if I go there for some bureaucratic or financial issues, then they will not give me the answer...There is now one certain person at our faculty who is somehow providing all the answers...He is so involved in all those systems that everyone sends you to him and it's obvious that he doesn't have time. And then he is giving these simplified answers to satisfy people (Interview 4; 22/4/2014).

Not many people have the whole picture. Communication channels are not at the level that they should be. Of course, people are overloaded and don't have time to think (Interview 3; 23/4/2014).

A third internal dynamic influencing the interpretation of university integration is the unequal distribution of power and resources between members. Indeed, inequality was touched upon in the previous sub-section. Such inequality naturally means that members' stakes in university integration differ; some stand to profit while others may lose their competitive edge. This dynamic can be inferred from the following statement by a respondent from one of the larger faculties:

We have some problems now; the university wants that the members of the university have a centralised information system. But we already have one based on our needs. We developed our information system. For example, we have a student survey on our system and other such things. They want to bring our survey to their system. This means costs. This means deferring many things that we have now. We are going a step back probably (Interview 12; 4/4/2014).

Interestingly, this inequality of resources and power did not always translate into an explicit self-interest and polarised corporate politic. Indeed, the author asserts that university-wide integration can be helped *or* hindered by the relative strength of some members.

On the one hand, relative strength is a hindrance in that it can manifest in political dominance; actors coercively ensure their involvement in key programmes and in important governance bodies. Indeed, the KUL project is a good example of how some faculties dominate the development of interdisciplinary programmes, tutorial systems, and quality mechanisms (Interviews). Similarly, only a small number of faculties benefit from international projects, technology transfer and other structural mechanisms aimed at university integration. This kind of politicking is exemplified in the following quote:

This is corporate politics. You have to lobby for membership in the most important committees. Who is where and how influential someone is [are important]. We want to increase our influence through these formal mechanisms. If we are asked to participate in some university projects, we always find some people. And if they are not paid, we find some internal payment for them because we are interested in improving the entire culture within UL and the broader society (Interview 2; 4/4/2014).

Apparently, such political behaviour is not entirely self-motivated. Indeed, the aforementioned interviewee saw the faculty's influence as a positive force for the university; although a critical analysis of this statement would suggest the use of a discourse of altruism as a justification for the reproduction of the member's power. Furthermore, this kind of subtle self-interest may mean that members are not culturally aligned with the espoused common-interest.

However, policies of integration actually seek this concession that the ‘whole is stronger than the sum of its parts’, whatever the motivation. In fact, one interviewee from a strong faculty admitted that “without the university, we wouldn’t be what we are now. We need the university. I see our future in interdisciplinary studies” (Interview 2; 4/4/2014). Moreover, strong faculties can substantively contribute to joint initiatives, as the following statement suggests:

We see ourselves as a promoter. It is part of our social responsibility. We know for sure that we are the best...it is not good to be too high and the rest of the institution is not following you. And so I see as a part of our mission to be a promoter of performance-based activities. We are influential in forming the criteria for evaluating different processes and so on (Interview 2; 4/4/2014).

At an individual level too, issues of power and politics also come into play. While the data does not allow for any generalised conclusions, the following statements are revealing:

The basic aspiration [by proponents of centralisation is] that a certain manager judges his importance on the number of subordinates. That means that if everything is centralised, then I am a big guy (Interview 11; 25/3/2014).

I would call this [resistance to integration] egoism. ‘So, there are no collective objectives. I have only one priority; to run my own business. Everything around me is not my business’. [This is] survival mentality at the level of one person or small groups (Interview 6; 7/4/2013).

Finally, the historical legacy of university organisation in Slovenia was identified as a constraint to integration. As the EUA report (2007, p. 5) succinctly states: “the legacy of the past is heavy and is not adapted to the challenges of the present and the perspectives of the future. This is not a political or an ideological issue. This is a structural and organisational issue. Organisationally, the UL as an institution is a confederation of too many members rather than an integrated university. This lack of integration has many shapes. On the one hand, UL as a University has a weak central structure not equipped by proper competencies. The faculties are very autonomous. They do not see themselves as linked with the others”.

This constraint was also highlighted by at least seven interviewees. Below is the most overtly articulated observation:

To control everything, the communist party made a so-called socialist structure in the universities. So there was no difference between a university and an industrial company; the same rules, boards of workers and such stupidities. I think that the communist regime had problems that the university was too strong. So they decentralised to control with small communist party groups...In fact, here, with 130 people, we worked like a university. It’s unbelievable that a department boss has a CEO room and rules and so on. And we still have problems with this mentality... of course, [the university] is now [integrating]. But we never developed a strong university administration; strong management skills at the level of the university. And also in some cases...we have very weak managerial structures. And so the system is working from day to day. But without management quality control, financial structures and flows, it is quite problematic (Interview 6; 7/4/2014).

### 4.2.3. Enactment

All of the factors affecting the interpretation of policies of integration of course flow through into current states; they are enacted. The border between interpretation and enactment is blurred; “they are loosely-coupled and there is no simple one direction of flow of information between them” (Ball et al., 2012). Indeed, the author has already provided evidence related to current, lived (and thus enacted) integration behaviours, both formal and informal. This section will continue to outline the status quo at the two universities in light of the empirical investigation.

#### 4.2.3.1. Identity

Identity relates to enactments that attempt to socially reconstruct what the organization is or would like to be. There are two main levels on which to analyse the enactment of university integration as it relates to identity; the university and the faculty level.

Firstly, on the university level, the content analysis suggests that both UL and UM have transitioned from being social institutions in the most fundamental sense - i.e. something that transcends individual reflection and intentions (Miller, 2012) - to organisational actors. This entails more specific goals, missions and a self-determined sense of direction, as well as the ongoing elaboration, expansion and differentiation of formal organizational structures (Krücken, 2011). Indeed, the myriad of strategic documents and the development of university-wide systems, projects and structures indicate this fact. These examples will not be repeated. Accordingly, this increased reflection on organisational identity came across in interviews:

...we need some reflection, some analysis, to see where we are, where we need to go, some action plans; then implement them...Like all businesses in the world that want to survive. In our case, after years and years, we pushed to have something like a strategy (Interview 6; 7/4/2014).

This perception of the university as an organisational actor is reinforced by the involvement of external actors. Indeed, the increased entanglement of the university in society means that universities are increasingly held to account. The author argues that this has led to individual achievement and responsibility increasingly being attributed to the university as a whole, or to faculties. As Krücken (2011, p. 5) explains: “attribution of responsibility, which traditionally has been much more individualized, is now transforming into an organizational attribute. As organized actors, universities have to be understood as units, which produce decisions for which they are held accountable”. The establishment of SQAA as well as the increased number of external evaluations and accreditations are evidence of this.

However, the extent to which formal attempts to produce a common organisational identity actually impact individuals is questionable. As one interviewee noted, “We made an action plan. But it’s general good wishes; no clear actions. And nobody is pushing” (Interview 6; 7/4/2014). Furthermore, “missions of universities frequently invoke the same goals; e.g. ‘excellence in research and teaching’, ‘internationalization’ or interdisciplinary research programs and a focus on innovation and entrepreneurship. The use of the same goals in mission statements worldwide can be seen as an indication that universities enact globally institutionalized scripts of what a university is expected to be” (Krücken et al., 2009, p. 5). Indeed, such scripts are present at both UL and UM, whose missions and visions both invoke notions of world-class, research intensive, excellence and quality, interdisciplinarity, humanism, freedom and autonomy, creativity, ethics and responsibility, knowledge transfer, and nation building (UL, 2014; UM, 2013a). Yet these notions lack a clear sense of idiosyncrasy. Ironically, their identities are becoming more defined but less distinct.

Whatever their espoused identities, the author argues that UL and UM are both still in their infancy in terms of developing an integrated organisational identity. In the past, university initiatives were either confined to individual faculties or tied to the plans and ideas of rectors, as one interviewee explains: “We didn’t have a strategic programme. We had rectors’ programmes. When the candidate was elected it was immediately accepted as the programme for the university. Of course, faculties too had their own view in which direction they’d like to go” (Interview 7; 2/4/2014). This ad-hoc sequence of rectors’ and deans’ work plans arguably inhibited organisational continuity and strategic consistency. However, the recent implementation of longer-term strategic planning has resulted in an increasing awareness of the institution as a continuous entity.

While UM has made significant progress in designing an integrated, university profile, along with the associated structures and systems, it is only now beginning to be implemented. In fact, the university senate only approved the strategy and action plan in March 2014. Similarly, UL, while not co-ordinated to the same extent by a central authority, only articulated their first explicit strategy in 2005, while concrete attempts to develop projects that would garner an integrated identity only gained momentum following the EUA report in 2007, the main results of which are the KUL project, modifications to the habilitation system, and the establishment of a career centre (UL, 2014).

These developments are of course promising, but the follies of technical solutionism and the fragmented historical legacy means that integration is likely to be a long and winding road. As one vice-rector said: “We integrated the centres of excellence, and all these bodies have been created towards more interdisciplinary groups, towards more joint applications for projects. But this takes time; to persuade everyone to be on the same boat” (Interview 2; 4/4/2014). And despite these initial achievements at both universities, and the expanded role of the rectorate and common university actors, the rectorate remains more or less unchanged in terms of resources, professional capacity and numbers, as one interviewee explains:

Some central functions do not have sufficient support. Resources are a challenge. We are still understaffed. We are trying proactively to wake up the faculties, to think about horizon 2020, Erasmus + and all these things that they can get involved in. In that sense, we always lack people (Interview 13; 4/4/2013).

Moreover, four interviewees, including two in faculty leadership roles, mentioned that they felt they were not included in university-wide dialogue, activities, and strategic initiatives (see comment below). Thus, challenges at the university level remain to be solved.

We have never really even been invited. We have some professors who are cooperating on a personal level in some initiatives...But there is really not any substantial activity in that area that would be important for [the faculty]. We are trying to promote that but the faculty, at least me as a dean, has never been approached by a representative from [the new unit] (Interview 11; 25/3/2014).

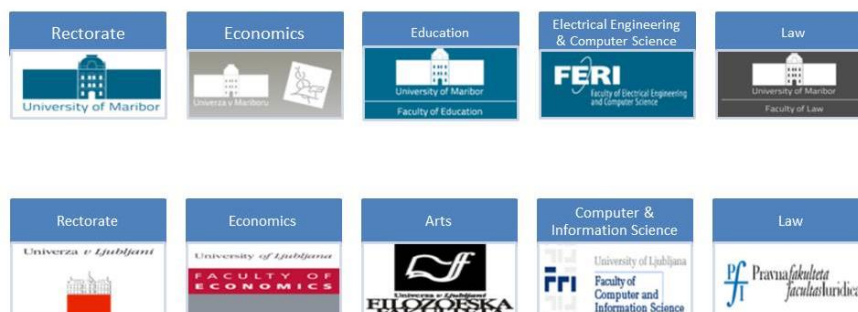
On the faculty level, the content analysis suggests that university-level attempts to develop a shared identity do not permeate the members. Indeed, internal borders between faculties remain quite strong. During the interviews, all members provided examples and anecdotes related specifically to their own faculties, and only those in the rectorate demonstrated a holistic, university-wide identification. Even strategic thought was predominantly confined to these borders. Phrases like, “in our school”, and “at our faculty” were ubiquitous during interviews. Indeed, “we” almost exclusively referred to the faculty, rather than the university as a whole.

A good example of these independent faculty identities can be observed in terms of corporate identity. Specifically, graphic design (organizational nomenclature, logos, company housestyle



and visual identification) is a fundamental approach to corporate identity (van Riel & Balmer, 1997). And it is easy to observe. Accordingly, the author has taken a random sample of faculties from each university to compare the logos on their websites with the logo on the general university rectorate page. This is depicted in *figure 3*.

**Figure 3: Logos**



Evidently, there is a significant degree of variation between faculties. In accordance with UM's greater degree of centralised authority, there is more standardisation in its logos in terms of colour schemes, fonts and images than at UL. While one may be tempted to instinctively dismiss this as trivial, the author argues that it is a good proxy for an integrated university identity. Indeed, van Riel & Balmer (1997, p. 340) assert: "The role of symbolism is now assigned a greater role and has grown from its original purpose of increasing organizational visibility to a position where it is seen as having a role in communicating corporate strategy".

The question then arises: do university- and faculty-level strategies align? For a start, quite a number of faculties still have not developed any kind of strategic vision at all, while those that have, show differing degrees of alignment. The faculties of arts and the faculties of electrical engineering at both universities have developed strategic visions and missions. These statements are laid out in *Appendix seven* alongside the universities'. A comparison reveals that at UM, statements are rather broad in all sources. Sentiments related to global recognition, humanistic values, and societal impact feature in all of them, they take a similarly short and abstract form and utilise similar language. So to some extent, there is a degree of strategic alignment between these documents. However, the level of abstraction prevents any kind of concrete comparison.

At UL, the visions and missions are more elaborated. In addition to the same sentiments as UM, there is more emphasis in shaping and contributing to the national identity. Again, similar notions of excellence, ethics, autonomy, knowledge exchange, application, and interdisciplinarity feature. The Faculty of Electrical Engineering even overtly states that it bases its activities on the principles of UL's mission statement. However, the form and emphases differ significantly. The Faculty of Arts', for example, is rather brief and abstract in its statements. The Faculty of Electrical Engineering on the other hand defines its strategic priorities with greater specificity. UL, therefore, shows some degree of alignment between visions and missions in terms of stating 'globally institutionalised scripts', but concrete integrated identities are difficult to discern.

In sum, both the variance in graphic design and in strategic content indicates challenges towards an integrated identity at both universities. An interviewee from UL confirms this in more critical language:

It should be like this [aligned]. [But] the people would like to survive on a daily basis; no strategies. And if you see some strategic priorities, there are only two: to be on the map of the top 500 universities, which is quite bizarre. And second, to make a huge

defence of financial issues. Other issues - structure, policies, quality, management - are not on the priorities (Interview 6; 7/4/2014).

Thus, there exists a certain contradiction between an increasingly coherent organisational identity and the persistence of strong, independent faculties. While we have seen a degree of integration at the systemic and university levels, responses to these initiatives tend to take place within disparate organisational units. This situation is exemplified in the selected quotes below:

Frankly, we are not cooperating with other faculties in the university (Interview 11; 25/3/2014).

There are no collective objectives. 'I have only one priority; to run my own business. Everything around me is not my business'. [This is] survival mentality at the level of one person or small groups. The same mentality that is running well in small groups, we in Slovenia are not able to do as the complete group, as strategy. It's a problem, that we don't have a collective trademark or identity...We only have chair mentality, like small tribes. And even if we have a department mentality, it's not the right one. We have to go up to the university (Interview 6; 7/4/2014).

Interestingly, one interviewee mentioned (see below) that a phenomenon exists in which individuals' affiliations change depending on whether they are in Slovenia or abroad, which was confirmed by other interviewees. Internationalisation, therefore, may be a positive force for university integration.

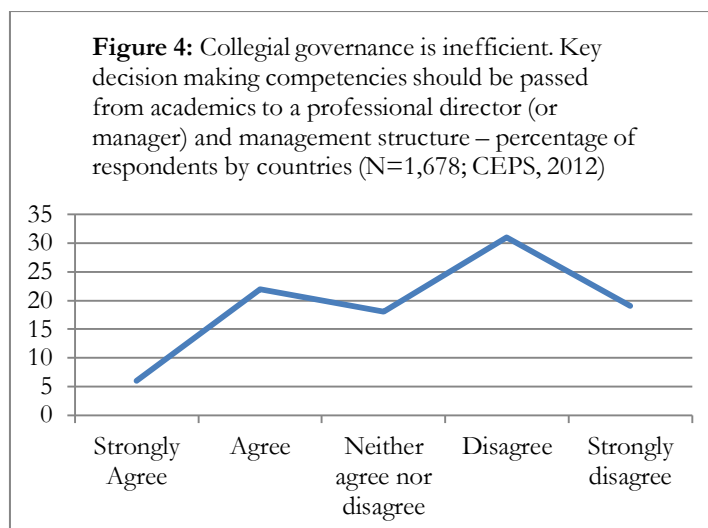
The fact is that the rectorate is still regarded as the university. We are the university and they are the faculty. It's very interesting. This relationship works differently within national borders than it does internationally. When the representatives of our members come to the rectorate, they fight with us. And when they go out, they fight for the university. It's also present when they present themselves. 'I am a member of the faculty, I am a member of university'. Their sense of affiliation changes depending on the environment.

#### **4.2.3.2. Hierarchy**

Stemming from policies of integration are changes to how actions are co-ordinated towards specific ends. Indeed, the implication of university integration is increased central coordination and control; a kind of hierarchization of the university. In this regard, three main aspects stand out in terms of enactment, namely: changes (or lack thereof) to decision-making structures; the professionalization (or lack thereof) of management; and internal power relations.

Firstly, university integration implies a strengthened steering core (Clark, 1998); a shift in the internal hierarchy of the university endowing leaders with a more important role. It also implies a rationalisation of governing mechanisms in the pursuit of efficiency, and the effective implementation of institutional strategies. As Krücken (2011, p. 5) explains: "against the backdrop of the loosely-coupled-system tradition it becomes obvious that decision-making structures within universities are becoming increasingly hierarchical. There is increasing concern for leadership in academia, and traditional collegial bodies of decision-making like the academic senate are losing importance".

For both UL and UM, such notions represent a change to traditional collegial governance, in which decisions pass through the rectorate, the senate, the governing board and the student council to gain approval. This model is still employed. Accordingly, an increasingly hierarchical power structure is not evident at either university. Indeed, the following figure (adapted from Zgaga et al., 2013, p. 42) depicts the Academy's scepticism towards a more 'managed' university:



Thus, collegial governance seems to be highly supported. Zgaga et al. (2013, p. 44) explain that “deans especially elaborated on the idea that only the smallest number of issues should be coordinated and managed at the university level...There were also ideas of autonomy belonging to individual (academic) professions/fields”. At least six interviewees also expressed some kind of satisfaction (or resignation) with the current model, including two individuals at the rectorate. Examples include:

I don't know that the main issue is that there are too many people involved in decision making processes, or that they are rigid and too far removed from real life. This is always the case if the systems are complex. I think it's unavoidable, you know. But on the other side, I still think that it's transparent. So if you want, you can understand and be involved (Interview 4; 22/4/2014).

The process and the path are very long. But this is the only way to gain acceptance. There are no quick decisions regarding major changes, they need time to be absorbed, discussed, put in the process, then agreed (Interview 3; 23/4/2014).

There was no indication that this model would be replaced. In line with the strong sentiments for collegial governance, the author notes a strong reluctance to change towards a more clearly delineated chain of command:

I noticed this managerial rhetoric. I feel them like certain constraints because they are not really in tune with what would be meaningful (Interview 4; 22/4/2014).

The people are complaining a lot. They don't like the system. But if you touch their rights...people don't believe in the benefit of these things. The key problem is that there are small structures, like hobby places. We could move it, make transparent decisions, and make a board and clear structures. They complained about the situation for 20 years, but when I tried to move, no possibilities (Interview 6; 7/4/2014).

However, UM did demonstrate a bolder, more decisive rectorate. Both the university and faculty leadership demonstrated a willingness to impose sanctions on poor performing faculty, with two interviewees referring to mandatory retirement, dismissals, and some consequent court cases. This was perhaps facilitated by an austerity law enacted in 2012, which mandates the termination of employment contract to public sector employees who have fulfilled the conditions for retirement (MoLFSA, 2012). However, given that the current governance model does not allocate more responsibility to leaders, such persons had little room for executive decision-making and were expected to gain consensus in order that their plans would be approved.

Consequently, there are a number of issues related to collegial governance that emerged, which warrant mention. However, it must be conceded that the data does not allow for conclusive judgements to be made as to the overall state of university governance.

The author argues that the collegial decision-making model at UL and UM distributes, and thus dilutes, responsibility. This means that allocating responsibility – i.e. identifying units/individuals as being in control and bearing responsibility – is difficult. The author noticed a lack of managerial protocol that would *assign*, rather than simply shift, power to the ‘front line’, whilst ensuring that university interests were accounted for. In fact, there seems to be a dichotomy; some basic administrative decisions go to deans or to the Senate – which is inefficient and disenfranchises individuals – yet individuals and small departments tended to operate quite separately. As one vice-dean points out:

I am not very happy because sometimes this decentralisation is an excuse for not making a proper management... The best structure is policies in the centre, action at the local level. The issue is that management should work. If you decentralise you need very clear rules, very clear monitoring. But in our case, each department has its own policies, own processes; we don't have a lot of managerial things. Ok, the general rules are the same. It's the same story with the university, because each faculty is a different planet (Interview 6; 7/4/2014).

Indeed, the rectorate has surprisingly little oversight of its members, resulting in a lack of comparability and integration across the university, and an inability to share resources. The following statements highlight this problem:

The whole university supports this non-centralised management and decision making which is more often bottom-up than top-down. This is most visible where finances and budgets are concerned where the management of resources accorded by the Rector to each department is weak (EUA, 2007, p. 5)

For example, I cannot participate in a project because I don't have enough money to finance a part of it. But in the end, I would get a lot. That's not a good situation... We can't just think about the budget of given faculties but we should think about the whole university, because every project is good for the whole university (Interview 1; 26/3/2014).

I think we should all be employed by the university. Then it doesn't matter at what faculty you have your lectures. This is a kind of centralisation that would be very good. In the building, we are sharing resources. But even here, it becomes a problem when it's connected directly to material costs (Interview 8; 26/3/2014).

Moreover, collegial governance gives the illusion of democracy. The analysis suggests that this distribution of responsibility actually distances people from organisational decisions, thus perpetuating a tribal mentality. Indeed, decisions are made in large, democratic bodies quite removed from many individuals. Not only can this result in a lack systemic knowledge, but it also allows organisational units and individuals to avoid responsibility, as was noted by EUA (2007, p. 5), thus:

The Senate is a genuine deliberative assembly that organises genuine debates and discussions. But it is not an organisation for decision: during the interviews the Team had in faculties, it became obvious that it is not rare that measures decided by the Senate are not strictly implemented at the faculty and the department levels. The academic members of the Senate see themselves more as representatives of their faculty than as part of a central body that is in charge of the general interest of the UL as a single entity. This particularity has several consequences on the decision making structures and processes, which are too complex and not efficient enough.

The argument is not for greater autocracy but for a more empowered and integrated members and individuals; whereby administrative decisions can be made at a local level, with clearly defined responsibilities and accountabilities at the system level. This, in turn, requires strong university-wide systems, processes and policies, as well as strong human resource competences.

Thus, issues of professionalization arise. It is a presumed prerequisite for an integrated organisation, as the allocation of responsibility and increased organisational sophistication requires a strengthened steering core (Clark, 1998).

Contrary to the preference for collegial governance, Zgaga et al. (2013, p. 41) note that the academy felt “it is necessary or inevitable to professionalise the management of universities”. They go on to explain that “the professionalisation of governance is expected in the future due to European and international trends”. So in terms of attitudes, this aspect of integration has filtered through. However, the majority of interviewees at both universities articulated the fact that, despite this attitude, this has not yet been realised:

In the whole system of the top management, we have quite poor managerial and administrative competences. It's quite unbelievable how we are tolerant to bad professionalism (Interview 6; 7/4/2014).

From my experience, we are not really suitably organised for the tasks and for the goals that we have. The basic structure of human resources that we have are scientists and teachers, and, on the other hand, students. And this whole [area] of administrative work, of professional support...these structures are really something which we lack, especially on the level of the faculties. They're not accustomed yet, especially since this is the time of crisis; they do not employ [anyone]...You know, we still are concerned with is the ratio between students and teachers, and we actually do not see all that subsidiary work going on in order to be better. What does constitute quality is not only better teaching but also a better supporting environment. The faculties need it. That is why they're trying to get it from the rectorate. But the original organisation and the human resources at the rectorate are not suited for this purpose (Interview 13; 4/4/2014).

Concretely, a good indication of professionalisation is the emergence of new categories of professional and related academic management positions and units, in fields such as planning, student services, quality control, and public relations; “in fields that contribute to the concept of an integrated, goal oriented entity that is deliberately choosing its own actions and that is eager to display this new image for others to see” (Krücken, 2011, p. 5). At both UL and UM, there is an emerging trend in this direction. Both universities have recently established career centres, quality offices, and technology transfer centres. But these units are new, small and under-staffed. They are not professionalised in the sense that specialist staff would be employed (including from abroad). This may be symptomatic of the limited size and scope of the labour market in Slovenia. Furthermore, other important functions for an integrated university, like human resources, organisational development, or public relations, are conspicuously absent, unchanged, fragmented or ill-adapted for strategic action. Even in the more developed areas like quality assurance, functions tend not to be structurally integrated across the university. Although, UM is starting to structurally link these functions to a greater extent.

In sum, the author noticed some small steps towards a more professionalised management, but overall it can be concluded that these are still very much in early stages of development.

Moreover, an important distinction between professional management in a university and in a private firm is its legitimate basis of power (Krücken, 2011). Indeed, decision-making is not vested in professional managers but in distributed, deliberative, predominantly academic bodies. Additionally, the professoriate enjoys a strong status vis-à-vis the administration. As such, the

power base of the new, professional manager is weak. The role of professional managers is confined to providing expert advice, information and presenting agendas and solutions; a kind of 'soft power'. This can also be conceived a service, rather than control, orientation (Krücken et al., 2013).

Reinforcing this conceptualisation of management is the fact that the structure and character of universities have historically not embraced top-down leadership. In academic environments, the idea of collegiality is strongly-rooted assuming a *primus inter pares* approach to leadership, whereby authority of disciplinary expertise, self-regulation, academic freedom, and autonomy take precedent over positional power or indeed the individual's ability to manage people, processes and systems (Bento, 2011; Malaza, 2009). Thus, academic leadership has placed less emphasis on control, and a greater value on democratic governance.

This perception of leadership in Slovenian universities also means that leaders inspire action (read cooperation) via personal and academic attributes rather than as the top actor in a management decision-making system (Krücken, 2011). If action cannot be commanded, then the role of trust is crucial. Indeed, interviewees, particularly at UL, demonstrated awareness that peer-to-peer rather than superior-to-subordinate relationships and activities were essential in order to create the necessary familiarity to enhance cooperation. But there were still a number of interviewees who questioned the extent to which trust exists at both universities. The following quotes highlight the role of trust:

I would say that integration comes and stems from trust. What is trust based on? It lays on [mutual] recognition and knowing each other; that opportunities are given that the members, the people, mingle, talk to each other, communicate. These platforms we have to provide for them so that they can join forces where they see opportunities (Interview, 13; 4/4/2014).

We just need to integrate these processes in the university, so that we know each other very well. Not to compete but to cooperate; to work on common projects; to realise that we all have benefits from this. Integration is cooperation...For me it's important how many people already sit together; how many people already cooperate together (Interview 1; 26/3/2014).

Finally, university integration is also challenged by unequal hierarchical power relations among members. In terms of decision-making structures, the democratic governance tradition at UL and UM suffers from one of democracy's inherent flaws; malapportionment. At present, it is taken for granted that all faculties are considered equal and are represented on the senate as such. Yet while all faculties are represented on the Senate equally, not all faculties are equal. Indeed, the relative strength and size of some faculties vis-à-vis others means that there may be inappropriate or unfair proportional distribution of representatives to decision-making bodies. This 'opens a can of worms' as to the very meaning of equality and representation, which cannot be fully addressed in this thesis. Questions arise, such as: who determines what is valuable (i.e. size, resources, fit-for-purpose, intrinsic value, connections to industry, student transformation, publication rates, social or economic development, etc.)? How is power derived? How is power mediated and exchanged?

Thus, issues of power also emerge. Indeed, relative differences give faculties impetus to pursue relative differences in the exercise of power. In this context, power is not simply based on *legitimate*, formal sources but also on *social* sources (French & Raven, 1959). Accordingly, the author noted that the rectorates tended to derive power and spur change through the provision of resources and information, what can be described as *informational* sources of power (Raven, 1965), while the exercise of power by stronger faculties was primarily based on knowledge,

experience, skills and talents; i.e. *expert* sources of power (French & Raven, 1959). This is evidenced in the following examples:

The deans were completely surprised when they saw the data and the analysis; not only data but also expert opinion. And so they accepted the evaluation as the reality of the university in 2013. To get consensus from this different faculties is very hard. All members agreed and accepted the strategic plan of university as their own. This is a huge achievement (Interview 7; 2/4/2014).

All other members are learning from us now. We are somehow a leader in this area. We give ideas to others to talk about; best practice. For example, student surveys. We are the first faculty to have this. And now the university is renewing these questionnaires and we gave them ours (Interview 2; 4/4/2014).

#### **4.2.3.3. Rationality**

Integration alludes to a more rationalised university; the final construct to frame how policies of integration are enacted. Indeed, increased socially embeddedness imbues the university with greater complexity and accountabilities, requiring a rational, managed organisation in order to respond to such demands. Thus, “older, more casual, and more idiosyncratic arrangements give way to more transparent and more standardized ways of organizing” (Ramirez, 2006, p. 227). At the most basic level, this means setting and measuring objectives.

The emergence of explicit strategic objectives at UL and UM has already been well-covered. It was also described that while a vast array of documents have been published, the actual goals tended to be broad and imprecise. Additionally, these goals and objectives are still far from being a common standard across the entire university.

Moreover, given the abstract nature of these goals, developing measurements, accounting systems and benchmarks in order to determine success is problematic or even impossible at this stage. Accordingly, both universities were not far progressed in this regard. However, quality assurance was one area on which both universities have focussed. Consequently, developing more concrete quality measures seemed to be a high priority. As such, both universities are in the process of upgrading their ICT systems to form a standardised university system to improve the quality loop. A senior leader from UM stated that quality indicators have been designed for the goals and priorities in the strategic programme, and that she would like to further develop this capability (Interview 7; 2/4/2014). UL, too, proclaims the following measures for better quality in its strategy, indicating a strong rationalisation (UL, 2014):

3.6.1. Strengthening the comprehensive system of quality assurance, including the common quality indicators of the university activity areas, permanent assessment of quality and improvement measures implementations. The existing instruments must be linked, such as habilitation criteria, students surveys and assessment of common services; new instruments must be elaborated, such as monitoring the employability of graduates. The quality assurance must be directly linked to the planning as well as to internal and external evaluations.

3.6.3. Strengthening of the university analysis and development office for establishing evidence-based university development and quality.

Again, a gap is perceptible between declarative and substantive measures, once more alluding to the relative infancy of integration at both universities. The following quotes indicate the perceived immaturity of standardised, functioning and useful systems and processes:

Frankly to say, we do not have a very complex measurement system. We are not a big school; 70 people. We know each other. We are measuring basically numbers. I know the university is talking a lot about a measurement system. What they really prepared, I am not aware (Interview 11; 25/3/2014).

Data collection is one of the actions within [the KUL project]. It's data collection on the study programmes, which we have now only on paper...we do not yet have a collection of study programmes in a database; that's what we are going to have, like a catalogue. And at the same time a platform for the revision and evaluation of study programmes (Interview 13; 4/4/2014).

The focus on quality as a means of rationalisation is significant in and of itself, as it indicates a strong connection to the European HE policy space. Indeed, quality development is one of the few areas to which the EU can directly contribute. The author argues that, while a focus on quality may have some positive implications for university integration, it also provides numerous challenges.

Firstly, questions arise as to what constitutes quality. Indeed, quality can be defined in a myriad of ways (Harvey & Green, 1993). What is a useful measure for one department or faculty may be of little consequence for another. The measurement and determination of academic performance, for example, differs significantly between disciplines, which favour different outputs; e.g. books, cited journal articles, patents, monographs, portfolios, etc. At both universities, the developing systems appear to be heavily guided by quantitative, highly-prescribed processes of audit-based quality control, which may fail to take into account these idiosyncrasies. Indeed, "the audit format introduces a one-way accountability and provides 'rituals of verification' instead of fostering trust, has high opportunity costs and may well be detrimental to innovative teaching and learning" (Hoecht, 2006). More than half of the interviewees questioned the relevance and consequences of the new systems and processes under development:

Different fields have different characteristics. You cannot compare everything. The situation in the field of medicine is completely different than in the field of business and economics. And so we have to be broad enough to recognise that fields are different and to live with these differences and still be able to live within the same building, under the same umbrella (Interview 2; 4/4/2014).

We have to fill out impact surveys that are not really meant for our discipline. They are from another area of work... It's limiting in that you get the feeling that only certain things count....Maybe they are not meaningful for me but I have to choose them because they count. If it's reported, then it must be important (Interview 4; 22/4/2014).

We want to measure everything now. We didn't think about these things before; how to measure student outcomes, how to measure student goals, these things. I think we are not talking to students but we are just measuring them...at the end of the day, what matters is the survey (Interview 12; 4/4/2014).

Secondly, connected to the issue of relevance is a perception of standardisation and measurement as burdensome. This may be a consequence of a lack of reflexive positionality, or a reaction to the fact that rationalisation is simply too generic and far-removed from the 'daily struggle'. Also, the culture and history of HE may lead individuals to be naturally sceptical of the benefits of this kind of 'managerialism'. As one interviewee from UM stated:

The common interest is in our mission. If we are going to do this [integration], we need to make the right condition and reduce the administration. 20 years ago, I was not pressed so much with this planning, reporting and all that. We don't need this plan or



that. Just leave me so I can work. Don't make another service and another administration department (Interview 1; 26/3/2014).

Finally, quality indicators, as promoted by external actors, may divert attention away from domestically significant issues. Indeed, one of the key arguments for university integration in Slovenia is to address issues of duplication, waste and a lack of incentives in the system. However, the current quality measures only go a limited way in addressing these issues.

## 5. Concluding Remarks

Through a studious investigation of the policy trajectory related to university integration the author hopes to have shed some light on a topic that hitherto lacked literature. Given the absence of foundations on which to build, the resultant thesis provides a high-level overview of the topic, which goes some way towards mapping the terrain. It aimed to extend and deepen theoretical understandings and produce a critical and contextualised account of how universities do policies of integration in Slovenia.

Accordingly, the forces shaping such policies were addressed, particularly the accentuated transnational, neo-liberal narratives that penetrate domestic policy. Moreover social and material changes compound pressures on governments and universities, redefining the role of HE in society and the economy. As such, universities take on increasingly complex roles, resulting in a managerial rhetoric aimed at creating more efficient, effective and integrated institutions.

Evidence suggests that attitudes are shifting within the two Slovenian universities to accept the inevitability of change, particularly amongst senior leaders. This includes the acknowledgment for a more socially-embedded, flexible, professional, rational, socially-just, meritocratic and integrated university. Accordingly, there are an increasing number of initiatives to this end that are taking root, particularly the recent implementation of longer-term strategic planning and quality management. It is difficult to say whether examples of integration are a 'result' of policy, or whether they are simply subjective responses to real, external pressures inherent in global trends, such as competition, demographics, globalisation, and financial crises.

Yet overall there remains a degree of variation as to how the two universities interpreted and enacted such change. While favourable attitudes and initial actions were detectable, they certainly were not universal. Dichotomies were apparent between and within universities as to how integration was defined, from where it should be initiated, and how to achieve it. Certainly, UM demonstrated a more determined attempt by the rectorate to integrate whilst UL evidences a rather more democratic, ad-hoc, yet not altogether ineffective, approach.

Socio-cultural and historical identities, coupled with scepticism towards transnational policy discourses, prevents the whole-hearted adoption of change. This may be justified given the negative fallout of recent market-oriented HE policies, such as a burgeoning private sector with questionable quality and integrity, the troubled implantation of the Bologna process and the increased demands on the professoriate with little demonstrable benefit. Such features may not just be particular to Slovenia but symptomatic of academia at large in Continental Europe.

As Bleiklie & Kogan (2007, p. 481) note: "In European public systems, the extent to which rhetoric based on the corporate management ideal has been followed up in practice varies and exists in a sometimes uneasy relationship with bureaucratic steering and the social responsibilities of universities as civil service institutions". Therefore, the current changes towards more integrated universities may in fact be less far-reaching than the political rhetoric suggests, buffered by traditional characteristics and modes of organisation.

In this context, Nokkala (2007, p. 222-3) offers some wise advice:

Although we may be critical of the new University ideal, it is essential that we are able to discuss critically the strengths and weaknesses of both the old University ideal as well as the new one. Rather than just saluting the old University ideal as a serene haven of search for truth, or denouncing the new University ideal because of its features of competition and competitiveness, we must be able to recognise the benefits of the new

ideal model, as well as the bleak past of the old idealised University: the heritage of colonialism, class society and disregard of indigenous knowledge.

### **5.1. Limitations**

Although these conclusions provide valuable insight into an under-researched topic, a finer-grained and more authoritative picture is hindered by the limited sample size. Indeed, given the national and regional significance of the topic, it would have been desirable to have a larger sample of both institutions and interviewees. However, this was impossible due to the limited *timeframe* and a lack of *responsiveness* from a number of potential interviewees.

The limited timeframe posed the primary challenge. This thesis was undertaken over the course of a 5-month-long semester. This meant the window for the actual collection of empirical data was extremely narrow, as other tasks - such as theoretical research, analysis, and writing - had to be taken into consideration. In reality, this left little more than one month for field work. Furthermore, interviewees were spread between Maribor, Ljubljana and Bled, which required additional travel and, thus, time.

However, the author contends that the methodology – both the policy trajectory approach and the case study research design – is apt for research into this subject matter. It allows for the integration of many variables and sources of data, and has strong analytical applicability. The author hopes that this demonstrates the study's research potential.

Moreover, the intention of this thesis was to provide a high-level overview of uncharted territory. While the author feels that this was achieved, it presented a multitude of variables beyond the scope of a master's thesis. Consequently, it is longer than expected. However, reducing the amount of variables would have defeated the aim of the thesis, and would have been difficult given the lack of existing literature on which to build.

### **5.2. Opportunities for Future Research**

Nonetheless, the thesis uncovered many artefacts, which warrant more targeted digging. Any one of the variables related to the policy context or to interpretation and enactment in Slovenia could be pursued.

Specifically, new theorisations of integration in non-Western contexts would be insightful. In Slovenia, a number of topics are potentially interesting, particularly socio-cultural phenomena like identity, reflexive positionality, resistance to technical solutionism, power and politics, all of which require sophisticated analytical tools. More practical areas of focus could be governance and decision making structures, case studies of new projects, strategies or organisational units, and analyses on policy, funding, and resource allocation.

### **5.3. Recommendations**

There are also practical implications from the thesis.

Notably, dichotomies need to be addressed. At an institutional level the notion of subsidiarity is proposed as a means to resolve the conflict between collegial governance and efficient, effective, empowered and responsible faculty and staff. In general, subsidiarity aims to have most tasks determined and carried out as close as possible to the recipients of such decisions. However, it allows for intervention by a central authority both in terms of determining policy and in terms of executing decisions and tasks, should the central authority be more effective at doing so.

Applying this concept to integration would allow greater strategic coordination at a university level, while still ensuring that individuals could exercise their discretion at a more localised level.

However, this requires strong university-wide systems, processes and policies, as well as strong human resource competences, in order to support the ‘front line’ and respond and correct errors made at a local level (Birnbaum, 1988).

Thus, concrete recommendations include:

- invest in human resource development so that all members of the university can operate professionally and take responsibility;
- invest in systems so that the rectorate can communicate with, monitor and regulate members; this includes simple things such as a common and well-resourced intranet;
- devolve responsibility and decision-making in real terms to the ‘front line’ so people take ownership of their tasks;
- have clear, well-publicised policies and procedures to guide organisational behaviour;
- make integration meaningful and engaging; demonstrate benefits, enhance service, involve and connect tribes and territories, recognise differences, limit standardisation, increase trust; and
- a more balanced approach to quality assurance and enhancement in which quantifiable measures are balanced against more qualitative methods that account for local practices and promote trust and professional autonomy.

## **5.4. Last Words**

On final reflection, the thesis trod a delicate path between mapping the field and diving more deeply into a single topic. While the various levels of the policy trajectory added valuable contextual perspectives which sought to provide a broad basis for future research, they also hindered more focussed analyses. Indeed, the aim of thesis was ambitious, maybe overly so. One may argue that it may have been preferable to focus on only one phase of the trajectory, i.e. formation, interpretation or enactment.

The final product is a thesis that makes a contribution to the understanding and conceptualization of organizational integration as it specifically relates to HE, and policies thereof. Empirically however, it only scratches the surface regarding the plethora of ways in which this concept, introduced at the systemic level, has been interpreted and enacted in Slovenia.

However, the decision was made to go broad rather than deep. So while selected elements of university integration may not have been magnified, the thesis provides a qualitative rendering of the picture in order that readers may discern a clear narrative by which to make sense of, uncover and understand challenges and opportunities for further improvement.



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## Appendices

### Appendix one: Policy Ideas from the *Europe of Knowledge*

	Bologna Process ( <i>italics added by author</i> )	EU HE Modernisation Agenda (Europe 2020) ( <i>italics added by author</i> )
Policy Ideas	<p><b>Employability:</b> to enhance the <i>employability</i> and personal and professional development of graduates throughout their careers to <i>serve Europe's needs</i> (the Bucharest Communiqué, 2012).</p> <p><b>Education, Research &amp; Innovation:</b> The Leuven/ Louvain-la-Neuve Communiqué (2009) acknowledges that <i>higher education fosters innovation and creativity in the society</i>, and, in the same time, higher education itself needs to be based on the current state of the art in research and development.</p>	<p>The EU needs more highly skilled, competent and innovative people in order to <i>respond to global competition</i>. Higher education institutions therefore have a crucial role to play.</p> <p><b>Improving the quality and relevance of higher education:</b> curricula, including researcher training, must be <i>attuned to current labour market needs</i>. New technologies must be exploited for more effective research methods and more flexible and personalised teaching (e.g. eLearning). Better working conditions and the use of continuing education are necessary in order for the EU to <i>attract and retain high quality teaching staff</i>.</p>
	<p>The Bergen Communiqué (2005) affirms that higher education is at the crossroads of research, education and innovation. In this respect, stimulating research and innovation and <i>creating and maintaining a broad, advanced knowledge base for our societies</i> are some of the purposes of higher education institutions in the frame of the EHEA, alongside with <i>preparing students for their future careers</i>, active citizenship and enabling their personal development.</p>	<p><b>Linking higher education, research and business:</b> partnerships between higher education institutions and business must be encouraged. It is also important that universities should use the results of research and innovation in their educational offer and promote entrepreneurial, creative and innovative skills.</p>
	<p><b>Financing &amp; Governance of Higher Education:</b> "Higher education institutions have gained greater autonomy along with rapidly growing <i>expectations to be responsive to societal needs and to be accountable</i>. Within a framework of public responsibility we confirm that public funding remains the main priority to guarantee equitable access and further sustainable development of autonomous higher education institutions. Greater attention should be paid to <i>seeking new and diversified funding sources and methods</i>." (the Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve Communiqué, 2009, par. 23)</p>	<p><b>Improving governance and funding:</b> it is necessary to increase investment in higher education and to <i>diversify funding sources</i>, drawing to a larger extent on <i>private funding</i>. In addition, funding systems must be more flexible, enable institutions to <i>set their strategic direction</i> and be <i>results-based</i> in order to introduce an <i>element of competition</i>.</p>

Sources: European Commission (2011); EHEA (2014)

## Appendix two: Policy Ideas from Slovenia

*Note:* The examples are selected from the most recent available documents in English.

	Higher Education Act	National Plan for Higher Education 2011-2020
Policy Ideas	<b>Article 10 (legal subjectivity of a university and members):</b> A university shall be a legal person. Within the context of a university, faculties and art academies shall be established, as well as technical colleges and other institutions – university members (hereinafter referred to as: university members).	Establish a system of internal organisation of universities which will encourage cooperation between departments and/or members and enable a greater number of interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary programmes.
	<b>Article 19 (statute):</b> Higher education institutions, which are legal persons, shall have a statute, which shall regulate their organisation and operations.	Enable autonomous decision-making regarding internal organisational structure in the new arrangement of higher education institutions.
	<b>Article 13 (assets):</b> A university or an independent higher education institution, which was established by the Republic of Slovenia, shall be the owner of assets, acquired from public and other sources. A higher education institution shall manage and have power of disposal over the assets, used for the implementation of its activities in accordance with the university act of constitution and statute, unless otherwise stipulated by this Act.	Enhance co-operation between higher education institutions and public research institutes.  Enhance co-operation between higher education institutions and the economic and public sectors.
	<b>Article 6 (autonomy of higher education institutions):</b> A university shall be an autonomous, scientific-research, artistic and educational higher education institution with a special status. Universities and independent higher education institutions, which are established by the Republic of Slovenia, shall operate according to the principles of autonomy, which shall mostly ensure the following: ... - independent regulation of internal organisation and operations	Appropriate remuneration (basic salary) for the type and scope of work and qualifications of an individual needs to be enabled... The human resources field in higher education, including “habilitacija”, will be modernised... The basic principles will be the protection of the quality of institutions and the facilitation of excellence for which the best personnel is required and particularly their diversity and flexible experience. The in-breeding of personnel leads to a closeness, and a lower quality and it means worse conditions for the creation of new

	<p>by statute in accordance with the law,          - adoption of measures for the election in the title of university teachers, scientific workers and university co-workers,          ...          - establishment and adoption of education and scientific-research programmes, determination of the education regime and determination of forms and periods of the students' assessment of knowledge,          ...          - determination of forms of cooperation with other organisations,          - management of assets in accordance with the purpose, for which they were obtained.</p> <p><b>Article 44 (The Content of the National Programme):</b> The National Higher Education Programme shall:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– determine the objectives of higher education,</li> <li>– determine study, scientific and research, and artistic areas of national significance,</li> <li>– determine the activities required for the development and efficient work in higher education,</li> <li>– determine the standards to perform higher education activities,</li> <li>– determine the indicative scope of funds to implement the National Programme.</li> </ul> <p>The National Higher Education Programme and the National Research and Development Programme shall have to be harmonised in defining the research areas.</p>	<p>knowledge... Enable the transfer of personnel among higher education institutions.</p> <p>Enable higher education institution profiling – in terms of organisation, programme and implementation; higher education institutions will formulate their various missions.</p>
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Sources: RS (2008); MoHEST (2011)



### Appendix three: Conceptual Framework (original)

TABLE 1 *Transforming organizations: concepts, indicators and items defining responsibility*

Concept	Indicator	Item
Identity	Constructing boundaries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Defining own activities, environments and organizational boundaries</li> <li>• Defining relations with other organizations (competitors, partners) and government (sponsor, customer)</li> <li>• Establishing contracts between upper and lower levels (contractualization)</li> <li>• Having legal 'independency' (publicly owned companies, privatization)</li> </ul>
	Controlling collective resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Commanding entry and exit</li> <li>• Having financial discretion (e.g. block grants and diversification of funding base)</li> <li>• Employing your own staff and setting labour conditions</li> </ul>
	Being special as an organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Defining cost-benefit centers as owners of resources</li> <li>• Having a special task, purpose, competence, resources, structure, way of working, or representing special ideas</li> <li>• Marketing profiles through logos and (new) brand names</li> <li>• Emphasizing differences between your organization and others</li> </ul>
Hierarchy	Central coordination and control	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organizing hierarchies in layers of 'leaders and led'</li> <li>• Authoritative centre directs action</li> <li>• Planned action guided by organizational policies</li> <li>• Attributing achievements to the whole</li> </ul>
	Allocating responsibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identifying units/individuals as being in control and bearing responsibility</li> <li>• Assigning more responsibility to leaders</li> <li>• Accounting to superior (hierarchy) or external stakeholders</li> </ul>
	Constructing management (control-oriented)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chief executives are not professional bureaucrats (civil servants) but managers</li> <li>• Creating managerial discretion (freeing managers to manage) and strong organizational leadership</li> <li>• Establishing management teams</li> <li>• Creating new middle management positions</li> <li>• Recruiting new leaders from outside</li> </ul>
Rationality	Setting objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Management as a career qualification and career path</li> <li>• Setting single or limited number of goals</li> <li>• Separating services in units</li> <li>• Management-by-objectives (internal and external)</li> </ul>
	Measuring results	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Registration of results</li> <li>• Accounting for actions (systematic connection between goals and actions)</li> <li>• Expectations to be efficient</li> <li>• Benchmarking</li> <li>• Support by management accounting techniques (financial as well as performance related)</li> <li>• Assigning numerical values (detailed performance indicators)</li> <li>• Performance agreements and, consequently, frequently monitoring</li> </ul>

Source: De Boer et al. (2007)

## Appendix four: Conceptual Framework (modified)

Construct	Key Concepts	Sample Questions
<b>Identity – Constructing boundaries</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Defining own activities, environments and organizational boundaries</li> <li>Defining relations with other organizations (competitors, partners) and government (sponsor, customer)</li> <li>Establishing contracts between upper and lower levels (contractualization)</li> <li>Having legal 'independency' (publicly owned companies, privatization)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interdisciplinarity / mode 1 and mode 2</li> <li>Innovation system: Triple helix</li> <li>University in the knowledge society</li> <li>Organisational Actorhood</li> <li>Relationship between centre (Rectorate) and the periphery (Faculties and Schools)</li> <li>Relationship between organisational actors with external stakeholders</li> <li>Legal status</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How do you define your field of research/teaching?</li> <li>Where does your affiliation lie as an academic/professional?</li> <li>where are the boundaries of your university environment (faculty/institution?)?</li> <li>Is the university part of the public sector?</li> <li>Is/should the university be part of or detached from other sectors?</li> <li>Is the university the main machine for the production of knowledge in Slovenia?</li> <li>When did you feel you really became a member of the university (stage of career/student)?</li> <li>Who is at the heart of your organisation?</li> </ul>
<b>Identity – Controlling collective resources</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Commanding entry and exit</li> <li>Having financial discretion (e.g. block grants and diversification of funding base)</li> <li>Employing your own staff and setting labour conditions</li> <li>Defining cost-benefit centers as owners of resources</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Diversification of funding base</li> <li>Resource distribution / contribution (downward AND upwards flows?)</li> <li>Legal statuses of faculties related to finances</li> <li>Employing your own staff and setting labour conditions</li> <li>Interplay between faculty generation of income and sharing income across HEI</li> <li>Resource distribution / contribution (downward AND upwards flows?)</li> <li>Legal statuses of faculties related to finances</li> <li>Academic capitalism – detracts from whole – focus on market rather than institution.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Where do your resources comes from?</li> <li>Who determines their distribution?</li> <li>Does the university 'tax' income generated by individual academics and faculties?</li> <li>Are you better or worse off than colleagues from other faculties/departments? How so?</li> <li>What happens in the rectorate (or other funders like govt or industry) tell you how to allocate your resources?</li> <li>Who determines your career trajectory?</li> </ul>
<b>Identity – Definition and pursuit of explicit strategic priorities (profiling)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Having a special task, purpose, competence, resources, structure, way of working, or representing special ideas</li> <li>Marketing profiles through logos and (new) brand names</li> <li>Emphasizing differences between your organization and others</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Link to EU modernisation agenda and Europe 2020</li> <li>Major questions: As a unified organisation or as departmental specialists?</li> <li>Organisational Actorhood</li> <li>Profiling</li> <li>Strategic alignment</li> <li>Related to identity of whole - Is there one?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How would you describe the UoLj?</li> <li>Institutional profile/centres of excellence?</li> <li>To what extent is your organisation conforming to EU recommendations for a more strategic approach to governance?</li> <li>How?</li> <li>Are other Slovenian universities comparable to the UoLj?</li> </ul>

<p><b>Hierarchy- Central coordination and control</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Organizing hierarchies in layers of ‘leaders and led’</i></li> <li>• <i>Authoritative centre directs action</i></li> <li>• <i>Planned action guided by organizational policies</i></li> <li>• <i>Attributing achievements to the whole</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• autonomy and freedom (multiple levels)</li> <li>• decentralisation</li> <li>• Formal structures</li> <li>• Decision making processes</li> <li>• Conceptualisations of academic life</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Who are the leaders in your organisation?</li> <li>• How does organisational leadership impact on autonomy and academic freedom?</li> <li>• Would you consider Professors (redni prof) and phd candidates <i>colleagues</i>?</li> <li>• What compels you to undertake your daily tasks in terms on T, R, S and admin? (check consistency w. Uni strategy) e.g. Why are you involved in (international or multidisciplinary project)?</li> <li>• Are you rewarded for contributing to institutional goals?</li> <li>• Does the university help you succeed?</li> <li>• Should there be more or less people involved in setting the direction of the university?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Hierarchy- Allocating responsibility</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Identifying units/individuals as being in control and bearing responsibility</i></li> <li>• <i>Assigning more responsibility to leaders</i></li> <li>• <i>Accounting to superior (hierarchy) or external stakeholders</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Formal/informal leaders/power</li> <li>• Managerialism</li> <li>• Accountability</li> <li>• Where are decisions being made? Why type of decisions? Etc.</li> <li>• Role of the EU and quality agencies (accountability)</li> <li>• Identification of stakeholders and their role in institutional governance</li> <li>• Logics and sanctions</li> <li>• How is success measured, acknowledged and rewarded?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Who are you accountable to?</li> <li>• What are you responsible for?</li> <li>• Where/how are decisions made? What kind of decisions?</li> <li>• If something goes wrong, who takes the blame? (seek examples)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Hierarchy- Constructing Management (control-oriented)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Chief executives are not professional bureaucrats (civil servants) but managers</i></li> <li>• <i>Creating managerial discretion (freeing managers to manage) and strong organizational leadership</i></li> <li>• <i>Establishing management teams</i></li> <li>• <i>Creating new middle management positions (institutional research, etc.)</i></li> <li>• <i>Recruiting new leaders from outside</i></li> <li>• <i>Management as a career qualification and career path</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reality: who is actually holding these positions? Professional background and training.</li> <li>• Perceptions on professionalization</li> <li>• Executive powers</li> <li>• Leadership</li> <li>• Types of power</li> <li>• Context – self-managing community of scholars</li> <li>• New structures (including new functions such as quality assurance, institutional research, etc.)</li> <li>• Mode 2 and interdisciplinarity: how is this managed/organised?</li> <li>• Historical and national factors.</li> <li>• Role and efficacy of Leadership</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Who is the leader of your university?</li> <li>• How would you describe your rector? Dean? Department head?</li> <li>• Does the university have a senior management team (governing board)? Who is on it? Who should be on it?</li> <li>• How would you describe the systems and process at your uni?</li> <li>• Are decision making processes clear, appropriate, efficient and effective?</li> <li>• What happens if the Dean...?</li> <li>• How do leaders lead in your organisation?</li> <li>• HAs the governance/management structures of your university changed to meet strategic changes?</li> <li>• Leaders from outside? How would you feel if someone from the (UK) was appointed/elected as [leader]?</li> <li>• What does it take to be the...(rector, president, dean)?</li> <li>• Would you like to be...?</li> </ul>

<p><b>Rationality- <i>Setting objectives</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Setting single or limited number of goals (multiversity)</i></li> <li>• <i>Separating services in units</i></li> <li>• <i>Management-by-objectives (internal and external) (3 missions)</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Multiversity &amp; organisational typologies</li> <li>• Rational/formal organisation</li> <li>• Separation of labour – how do pieces connect? Structural and cultural mechanisms?</li> <li>• How are the units being redefined?</li> <li>• Financial/funding KPIs; accountability; quality assurance; competition; performance objectives/incentives, etc.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is your university comprehensive?</li> <li>• So, does it set objectives or let them emerge?</li> <li>• What if the objectives are in conflict?</li> <li>• Who coordinates these objectives between units?</li> <li>• Could there be a better way to structure the university?</li> <li>• Are you empowered or restrained by indicators, targets, etc.?</li> <li>• How is your success measured?</li> <li>• What is the focus of current objectives? (rationales)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Rationality- <i>Measuring results</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Registration of results</i></li> <li>• <i>Accounting for actions (systematic connection between goals and actions)</i></li> <li>• <i>Expectations to be efficient</i></li> <li>• <i>Benchmarking</i></li> <li>• <i>Support by management accounting techniques (financial as well as performance related)</i></li> <li>• <i>Assigning numerical values (detailed performance indicators)</i></li> <li>• <i>Performance agreements and, consequently, frequently monitoring</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• HE Modernisation Agenda</li> <li>• Neo-liberal discourse</li> <li>• NPM</li> <li>• Funding and austerity</li> <li>• National and European standards/data/reviews</li> <li>• Rankings; Influence on what is measured?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• (more practical questions)</li> <li>• What happens if you do not meet certain objectives?</li> </ul>

## **Appendix five: Descriptions of Sample Institutions**

Briefly, the University of Ljubljana was established in 1919 as the first modern university in Slovenia. It is a very large university, with approximately 50,000 undergraduate and postgraduate students, and over 300 different undergraduate and postgraduate study programmes. It employs approximately 6,000 higher education teachers, researchers, assistants and administrative staff in 23 faculties and 3 arts academies. The central building, all three academies and faculties are located in the centre. Some of the most recent and modern buildings were constructed on the outskirts of Ljubljana, giving the university and its students a ubiquitous presence in the city (University of Ljubljana, 2014).

Socio-economic development in the North-East of Slovenia warranted the establishment of a second university in 1975, the University of Maribor, which came into existence as a merger of six local polytechnics (Zgaga, 1996; Huisman & Vrečko, 2003), thus giving it strong historical competence in applied research, teaching and service. The University of Maribor is thus a relatively young institution and the second largest university in Slovenia, located in Maribor, Slovenia's second largest city and the capital of the Styrian region. It boasts around 20,000 students and approximately 2,000 faculty and staff members. It has seventeen faculties, which offer a multitude of undergraduate and postgraduate study programmes.

## Appendix six: The General Inductive Analysis Approach

The following are some of the purposes underlying the development of the general inductive analysis approach.

1. to condense extensive and varied raw text data into a brief, summary format;
2. to establish clear links between the research objectives and the summary findings derived from the raw data and to ensure that these links are both transparent (able to be demonstrated to others) and defensible (justifiable given the objectives of the research); and
3. to develop a model or theory about the underlying structure of experiences or processes that are evident in the text data.

**Comparison of Qualitative Analysis Approaches**

	General Inductive Approach	Grounded Theory	Discourse Analysis	Phenomenology
Analytic strategies and questions	What are the core meanings evident in the text, relevant to evaluation or research objectives?	To generate or discover theory using open and axial coding and theoretical sampling	Concerned with talk and texts as social practices and their rhetorical or argumentative organization	Seeks to uncover the meaning that lives within experience and to convey felt understanding in words
Outcome of analysis	Themes or categories most relevant to research objectives identified	A theory that includes themes or categories	Multiple meanings of language and text identified and described	A description of lived experiences
Presentation of findings	Description of most important themes	Description of the theory that includes core themes	Descriptive account of multiple meanings in text	A coherent story or narrative about the experience

Some of the analytic strategies or principles underlying the use of a general inductive approach are described below:

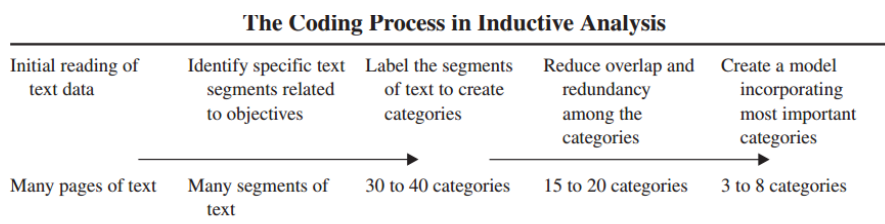
1. Data analysis is guided by the evaluation objectives, which identify domains and topics to be investigated. The analysis is carried out through multiple readings and interpretations of the raw data, the inductive component. Although the findings are influenced by the evaluation objectives or questions outlined by the researcher, the findings arise directly from the analysis of the raw data, not from a priori expectations or models. The evaluation objectives provide a focus or domain of relevance for conducting the analysis, not a set of expectations about specific findings.
2. The primary mode of analysis is the development of categories from the raw data into a model or framework. This model contains key themes and processes identified and constructed by the evaluator during the coding process.
3. The findings result from multiple interpretations made from the raw data by the evaluators who code the data. Inevitably, the findings are shaped by the assumptions and experiences of the evaluators conducting the study and carrying out the data analyses. For the findings to be usable, the evaluator must make decisions about what is more important and less important in the data.

4. Different evaluators may produce findings that are not identical and that have non-overlapping components.
5. The trustworthiness of findings derived from inductive analysis can be assessed using similar techniques to those that are used with other types of qualitative analysis.

The following procedures are used for the inductive analysis of qualitative data:

1. Preparation of raw data files (data cleaning): Format the raw data files in a common format (e.g., font size, margins, questions or interviewer comments highlighted) if required. Print and/or make a backup of each raw data file (e.g., each interview).
2. Close reading of text: Once text has been prepared, the raw text is read in detail until the evaluator is familiar with its content and gains an understanding of the themes and events covered in the text.
3. Creation of categories: The evaluator identifies and defines categories or themes. The upper-level or more general categories are likely to be derived from the evaluation aims. The lower-level or specific categories will be derived from multiple readings of the raw data, sometimes referred to as *in vivo* coding. In inductive coding, categories are commonly created from actual phrases or meanings in specific text segments. Several procedures for creating categories may be used. When using a word processor, marked text segments can be copied into the emerging categories. Specialist qualitative analysis software can be used to speed up the coding process when there are large amounts of text data (cf. Durkin, 1997).
4. Overlapping coding and uncoded text: Among the commonly assumed rules that underlie qualitative coding, two are different from the rules typically used in quantitative coding: (a) one segment of text may be coded into more than one category, and (b) a considerable amount of the text (e.g., 50% or more) may not be assigned to any category, because much of the text may not be relevant to the evaluation objectives.
5. Continuing revision and refinement of category system: Within each category, search for subtopics, including contradictory points of view and new insights. Select appropriate quotations that convey the core theme or essence of a category. The categories may be combined or linked under a superordinate category when the meanings are similar.

Indeed, a rigorous and systematic reading and coding of data allows major themes to emerge. Data is coded, enabling an analysis according to particular themes, and the identification of relationships between themes. Similarities and differences across sub-groups can be explored.



Source: Thomas (2006).

## Appendix seven: Comparison of University- and Faculty-level Visions and Missions

	University of Maribor	Faculty of Arts	Faculty of Electrical Engineering & Computer Science
<b>Vision</b>	The University of Maribor shall become a <b>globally recognized innovation ecosystem</b> inspiring the <b>creativity of both employees and students</b> .	The Faculty of Arts at the University of Maribor educates students in a <b>humanist spirit</b> and with the prospect of <b>revelation and deepening the truth of life, research and science</b> .	To strengthen the positions of our <b>internationally-recognized</b> university education and research institutions within the fields of electrical engineering, computer science, information technology, communications, media, telecommunications and mechatronics, throughout Central Europe. To maintain <b>high quality</b> and <b>be of interest</b> for undergraduate and graduate students from Slovenia and abroad.
<b>Mission</b>	The mission of the University of Maribor is based on <b>honesty, curiosity, creativity, freedom of spirit, cooperation and knowledge transfer in the field of science, art and education</b> . Concerned with <b>mankind and sustainable development</b> , the University of Maribor <b>expands knowledge, raises awareness, and promotes humanistic values</b> as well as the <b>culture of dialogue, quality of life and global justice</b> .	The Faculty of Arts at the University of Maribor develops academic research as well as education in the fields of humanities, social, and educational sciences.  In its programs it supports <b>human dignity and global justice</b> and it will <b>develop cultural dialogue and tolerance</b> as well as <b>scientific initiative</b> .	The Faculty of Electrical Engineering and Computer Science at the University of Maribor (UM FERI) provides students with knowledge based on <b>internationally recognized</b> scientific research work, thus enabling them to be <b>successfully integrated within future working environments</b> in Slovenia and/or abroad.

Source: UMB (2014).



	University of Ljubljana	Faculty of Arts	Faculty of Electrical Engineering
Vision	<p>By 2020, the University of Ljubljana will be recognized as an <b>internationally open</b> and <b>excellent research university</b>, creatively <b>contributing to the quality of life</b>.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>academic excellence</b> and the highest possible quality,</li> <li>• <b>academic freedom</b> of the academic and other staff and students, especially the freedom of creativity,</li> <li>• <b>autonomy</b> in relation to the state, political parties, corporations and religious communities,</li> <li>• <b>humanism and human rights</b> including equal possibilities and solidarity,</li> <li>• <b>ethical and responsible attitude</b> towards the world.</li> </ul>	<p><b>The Faculty of Arts will grow into one of the finest educational and research institutions in the broader international context.</b></p> <p>Using <b>academic freedom</b> as a starting-point, it will further academic development in all areas in which it is educating experts. The Faculty will help students make use of their talents to achieve their career aims. By actively shaping an environment of equality, co-existence and mutual respect, the Faculty will not merely continue to provide effective support for its graduates; rather, it will also contribute to <b>addressing social issues</b>, as well as to the <b>spiritual and intellectual development of the Slovenian, European and world community</b>.</p>	<p>The vision of the Faculty is to achieve <b>excellent results</b> in electrical engineering education, to <b>exchange</b> achievements in the field of sciences with other universities and scientific research institutions, to achieve <b>resounding recognition</b> of scientific research work nationally and internationally, and to <b>cooperate</b> even better with businesses, the government and local communities as well as with other civil society institutions, in a desire to contribute to the greatest possible extent of social and scientific development and <b>progress in Slovenia</b>.</p> <p>Our vision of the future includes the introduction of numerous new <b>IT-assisted</b> forms of <b>lifelong learning and training</b>, enabling an even more <b>intensive transfer of knowledge into practice</b>, as well as the implementation of remote learning.</p>
Mission	<p>The University of Ljubljana implements and promotes basic, applied and developmental research and is <b>pursuing excellence</b> and the highest quality as well as the <b>highest ethical criteria</b> in all scientific fields and art. In these areas of <b>national identity</b> the University of Ljubljana specifically develops and promotes Slovenian scientific and professional terminology. Based on its own, Slovenian, and foreign research, the University of Ljubljana (UL) educates <b>critical thinking top scientists, artists and professionals</b> qualified for leading sustainable development, taking into account the tradition of the <b>European Enlightenment and Humanism</b> and with regard to human rights. Special attention is dedicated to developing talents.</p> <p>The UL encourages <b>interdisciplinary</b> and</p>	<p><b>The Faculty of Arts educates students in the humanities and the social sciences, preparing leading intellectuals and future teachers to think openly and critically about these areas.</b></p> <p>Particular attention is devoted to furthering knowledge which is of national significance and which <b>shapes Slovenian identity</b>. The Faculty of Arts fosters academic work, promotes new research areas, develops <b>interdisciplinary</b> study approaches and introduces new study programmes for its students. It incorporates academic knowledge into the learning process in a manner that, using tradition as a basis, gives rise to quality results that are essential for Slovenian self-awareness and the Faculty's fecund presence in the international sphere.</p>	<p>The mission of the Faculty is to carry out accredited study <b>programmes</b> in the field of electrical engineering as well as a scientific <b>research work</b>, and to successfully <b>transfer</b> knowledge into practice. We produce <b>the best</b> experts in electrical engineering and implement innovative scientific research programmes and projects in Slovenia and abroad. The Faculty builds its academic excellence through outstanding theoretical and empirical research work, extensive publishing of scientific and professional articles, and the successful transfer of research results to the educational process and practice.</p> <p>The Faculty bases its research activities, education and public service, as well as the relationship between its members, <b>on the principles of the University of Ljubljana mission statement</b>, namely:</p>

multidisciplinary study, exchanges results of achievements in science and art with other universities and scientific research institutions, thus contributing to the Slovenian and world knowledge treasury as well contributing to the **transfer** of these achievements among the students and other users.

The UL **cooperates with organizations** from economy and service in public and private sector, with state organizations, local communities, and civil society. With this cooperation accelerates the use of own research and educational achievements and contributes to the **social development**. With active responses to events in the environment represents the critical conscience of the society.

- to foster basic and applied research and development, and to strive for **excellence** and the highest possible quality;
- to meet the highest **ethical** criteria in all fields of science;
- to strengthen **national identity**, particularly by developing Slovenian technical terminology;
- to educate **critically thinking** top scientists and experts based on our own research efforts as well as on national and international; research achievements, devoting special attention to talent development;
- to **exchange** its scientific achievements with other universities and scientific research institutions;
- to work with manufacturing and service companies in the public and private sectors, as well as government bodies, local communities and civil society;
- to promote the **applied** use of its research and educational achievements, thus making a contribution towards **social development**;
- to actively respond to the developments in its environment, and to act as the **critical conscience of society**.

Source: UL (2014)

